



# City of Somerville

## Police Department

*Charles Femino*  
*Chief of Police*



January 31, 2021

To: Somerville City Council

RE: Item 21175: Somerville Police Staffing

Dear Honorable President McLaughlin and Members of the City Council:

You requested I update and discuss with the Council the staffing structure requirements for the Somerville Police Department within their respective departments.

I am forwarding you an updated Organizational Chart of the Somerville Police Department and additional supporting documentation to demonstrate the immediate need to fill the current vacant budgeted positions. It is my hope that this documentation along with the information provided during discussion with the Council will apprise you and the Council of the staffing necessary to ensure public safety within the City.

I look forward to discussing this matter you.

Very truly yours,

Charles J. Femino

**Public Safety Mission:**

The Somerville Police, as an organization, should be viewed as a structure whereby all staff, officers, and civilians, work together to provide the required public safety services to the City of Somerville. In order to be effective and ensure a coordinated approach, organizational direction and order is necessary.

There are a number of sub divisions in the police department that are required to provide the service and protection that Somerville's citizens expect. Each of the departmental sub divisions plays a vital role in delivering these services, and they all interrelate with other divisions within the department to achieve the overall success of the department. These sub divisions are depicted on the Somerville Police Department Organization Chart. **(See Somerville Police Department Organization Chart marked Appendix 1).**

The main purpose of any police agency is to ensure public safety within the community. This mission is primarily accomplished by the department's patrol division. The patrol division is responsible for responding to calls for service, conducting traffic enforcement, and providing visibility in the community to help deter crime, and interacting with citizens on a daily basis to foster positive relationships. Patrol officers have the responsibility of interacting with and providing care for those inflicted with a host of psychological and emotional issues, many of whom represent a risk to themselves and others. These calls require empathy and de-escalation methods that take time.

The Somerville Police Department Organizational Chart depicts the arrangement of relationships and responsibilities that exist between the various functions that are performed within the department, as well as the various supervisory personnel at each level. Supervisors are necessary and placed to provide a clear sense of authority (concept of "unity of command"). Another consideration in the placement of supervisors is the principle of "span of control" which defines the manageable number of subordinates that can be effectively supervised by one person.

Supervisors play a vital role in the coordinating the efforts of the subordinates they oversee. Supervisors at the various ranks have different levels of responsibility ranging from executive leadership to first line supervision.

The Somerville Police Department's sworn workforce is comprised of:

- **Police Chief (1)**
- **Deputy Chiefs (2)** - oversee the "Operations" and "Support Services" of the department,
- **Captains (3)**
  - Captain - Patrol Division – oversees the officers assigned to the three patrol shifts in east and west Somerville. This Captain is responsible for all issues that arise, and they interact with City Council members, business owners, and the community in a variety of ways. This Captain also oversees the Traffic Division and the Special Operations Division, which includes issues surrounding Homeland Security, Neighborhood Policing, the K-9 Officer, and Animal Control.
  - Captain - Administration – oversees all issues related to the department's training, 911 dispatch, detail office, community outreach & recovery group, records, information technology, and on-call matrons.
  - Captain – Criminal Investigations Division – responsible for the overall management of all criminal investigations for general detectives assigned to general investigations, family services, narcotics, the court liaison, and crime

analysis.

- **Lieutenants (11)** – The rank of Lieutenant is considered a mid-level executive position. Lieutenants play a vital role as the Commander (Officer in Charge). The Commander is frequently the highest-ranking officer working member of the department during the day operations of the department. The Commander is responsible for coordinating all activities on the shift. Six of the current Lieutenants serve in the patrol divisions.

The remaining Lieutenants are currently are assigned to:

- Criminal Investigations Division – responsible for reviewing reports forwarded for follow-up investigations. This Lieutenant is responsible for all aspects of case management: the assignment of the day to day criminal investigations and making sure investigations have proper follow-up and dispositions.
  - Professional Standards – conducting internal investigations based on internal and external complaints, as well as managing the accreditation process which includes updating policies and procedures according to Police Accreditation standards. This Lieutenant also is tasked with the oversight of the Police Accreditation process, as well as reviewing and coordinating efforts under the new Police Reform Bill.
  - Traffic Division – managing and coordinating all traffic related assignments. Including: crash investigations, traffic hearings at the District Court, education, and enforcement.
  - Special Operations – responsible for the preparation and planning of community events and critical incidents. This Lieutenant also serves as the department’s UASI Joint Point of Contact (JPOC) responsible for monitoring various grants.
  - Training – responsible for overseeing all of the 911 operations, as well as all mandated in-service training required by the MPTC. This encompasses a minimum of 40 hours of annual training for all sworn officers. This Lieutenant also serves as the department’s CPR/First and Firearm safety and requalification instructor.
- **Sergeants (18)** – The Sergeant rank is considered the most important level of supervision in ensuring the community receives fair and impartial policing on a day-to-day basis.

There are ten Sergeants assigned to the Patrol Division who are responsible for leading, directing, and controlling the subordinate officers, as well as holding them accountable. These supervisors are tasked with taking charge and coordinating patrol officers’ actions during high risk and critical incidents.

Other Sergeants are assigned to specific divisions and carry out duties related to their respective division. Examples include:

- Traffic Division – responsible for conducting day-to-day traffic enforcement and education. In addition, this supervisor oversees crash investigations, hackney applications and complaints, hit and run investigations, and traffic hearings at District Court.
- Family Services – responsible for coordinating investigations related to domestic violence and making sure the proper follow-up takes place. This Sergeant also serves as a liaison to the Middlesex District Attorney’s Office for adult and child sexual assault matters.
- Neighborhood Policing – responsible for coordinating the efforts of the neighborhood police officers. This Sergeant serves as a direct contact to the community and oversees STEPS, Cycle Kids, and several other school and community-based programs. Recently, this supervisor collaborated with other social service providers to locate and identify homeless persons within the City to help connect them with emergency housing and medical attention.
- Narcotic/Gang Division – responsible for coordinating the efforts of the officers assigned to his unit. In addition to investigating drug related crimes, this unit is active in seeking follow-up services to assist those affected by alcohol and substance abuse conditions. Recently, this Sergeant was assigned the additional duties to coordinate and manage gang related crime and intelligence.
- Special Operations – responsible for writing incident action plans for all city related events and making sure these events are staffed appropriately. This individual also reviews and approves permits for community events.
- Homeland Security – responsible for attending several weekly and monthly sub-committee meetings related to grant sources from Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI). This Sergeant files abstracts for grant requests and is instrumental in providing input in dissemination of UASI funds.
- Professional Standards – responsible for assisting with internal investigations. This Sergeant recently assumed a major role in the police accreditation process. They are directly responsible for revising written policies in accordance with changes pursuant to the Police Accreditation process.
- Court Liaison – responsible for overseeing court scheduling and assignments, as well as all aspects of the control of the evidence room. This supervisor is also responsible for processing information requests from both the District Attorney and Defense Attorney’s Office (i.e., booking videos and 911 calls).

- **Patrol Officers (94 budgeted; 84 filled)** – Currently, the organization chart depicts 64 officers assigned to patrol (including traffic). In my opinion, the department needs at least seven additional officers assigned to the Patrol Division and three other officers to fill vacancies in Family Services, Detectives, and the Gang Unit.

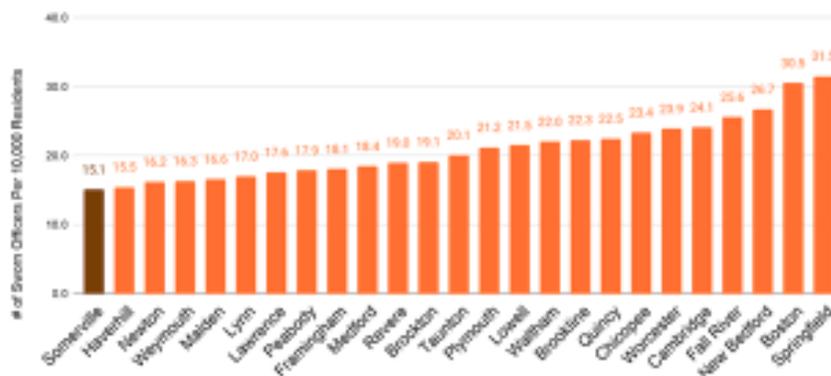
Officers not assigned to the Patrol Division are currently performing other functions within the department as depicted in the department’s organizational chart.

The chart below shows a comparison of staffing of other city and towns compared to Somerville PD.

## Current staffing levels at SPD

Somerville has the fewest officers per capita of the 25 most populous cities in MA (2018)

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, Full-time Law Enforcement Employees, by State by City, 2018



- SPD operates at lower staffing levels than comparable cities
- # of sworn officers has decreased by 10% since 2001

Source:

- FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, Full-time Law Enforcement Employees, by State by City, 2018  
<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2018/crime-in-the-u.s.-2018/table-78/table-78-state-city/massachusetts.xls>

### Staffing:

As of 2019, the United States Census estimated the City to have a total population of 81,360. With an area of 4.11 square miles, the City is considered the most densely populated municipality in New England. This does not consider the influx of daily commuters at the Davis Square T station, Sullivan Square T station, Assembly Row or the student population at Tufts University. Finally, the MBTA Green line will certainly increase the influx of the daily workforce population in the City. Yet, the department is expected and has been operating at a lower level of staffing compared to other cities that compare in size and population. It is important to note with an influx of a daily transient population brings potential victims and/or perpetrators of crime.

Currently, the department is staffed with 84 patrol officers with 10 vacancies. The Department's FY 21 budget includes funding for 94 officers.

The department maintains a minimum staffing in patrol of seven (7) officers on three shifts who provide 24/7 patrol duties. These seven officers are usually assigned individually to a patrol vehicle and are responsible for responding to calls for service within their assigned areas of patrol. When not responding to calls, officers attempt to utilize their time with other proactive duties.

Patrol shifts are often understaffed which leads to having to utilize on-duty officers assigned to other units such as the neighborhood police officers, detectives, and the traffic division. Only when other on-duty personnel are not available, and as a last resort, are working officers forced to holdover into another shift and work at least 16 hours and in some cases more (there have been 49 forced holdovers since the beginning of FY21). This is not perceived by officers as an opportunity for overtime; officers do not want to be forced to remain at work for this extended period. Forced holdovers lead to officer fatigue, stress, and low morale, and are considered a safety factor for not only the officer but also their colleagues and the community.

How many police officers are required on the midnight shift to adequately provide services has been a topic of recent debate. Although calls for service are fewer between midnight and 8:00 am, it is important to consider the types of calls as well. Shotspotter and SPD calls for service (CFS) data (Exhibits 1 & 2) indicate that the recent gun violence occurring in the city has primarily occurred during the Last Half (midnight-8 am) and First Half (4 pm-midnight) shifts.

Exhibit 1

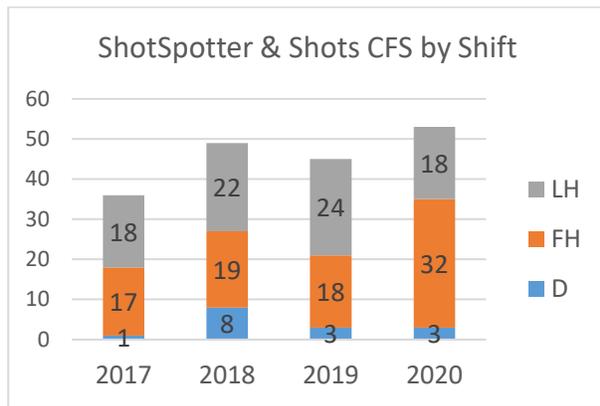


Exhibit 2

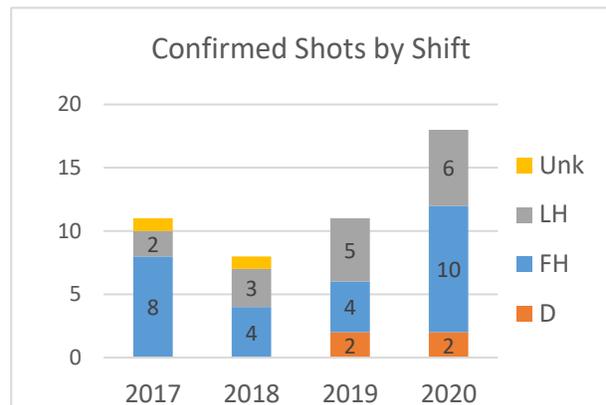


Exhibit #1 depicts the total annual shots-fired calls for service (CFS), year over year, by shift. Exhibit #2 depicts incidents of confirmed shootings and shots fired, year over year, by shift.

Serious incidents can require multiple officers for extended periods of time. During the Day shift (8 am – 4 pm) and First Half shifts, the patrol division is complemented by other units whose officers help when such incidences occur. The Last Half shift does not.

When serious incidents such as gun violence occur, the department maintains an “all hands-on deck” approach. The manpower needed to respond to such incidents many times leaves two or fewer cars to cover the rest of the city. Below are two examples of recent shootings, one that occurred First Half and the other Last Half. The tables depict the availability of Patrol Officers.

**Example 1**

**Scenario:**

*“On July 2, 2020 at 22:42, dispatch received multiple calls for shots fired at Memorial Rd and River Rd with multiple injuries. Officers and EMS responded and located four victims with gunshot wounds who were provided aid and transported to MGH. One Detective escorted the ambulances to collect evidence, learn the victims’ identities, and understand their conditions. Other officers established and maintained a crime scene log of all persons entering and leaving, and the Crime Scene Detective was called in. Dispatch sent a BOLO to neighboring police departments with information on the suspects’ vehicle. Shortly later, Cambridge PD located the vehicle, recovered a firearm and made three arrests. Fortunately, all victims survived.”*

**TABLE:**

The seven Area Cars are labeled by ward, E1, E2, E3, E4, W5, W6, and W7. Additional units you will see are composed of Supervisors and resources that may have been pulled from other units such as the Detective Bureau, K9, Somerville Housing Authority, etc.

Each block in the table represents a five-minute interval that is color coded based on each car's availability. Red blocks indicate the car is unavailable due to the shooting, green indicates that the car is available when two or fewer area cars are providing city-wide coverage, and white indicates that the area car is available when three or more cars are available.

### 7/2/20 Armed Assault to Murder (Shooting), First Half

- 22:42:54, SHOTS, 5 River Rd (20032991)
- 22:44:32, 2 shot
- 22:45:26, 1 party shot in the stomach
- 22:49:42, Camry fled Memorial onto Mystic
- 22:52:59, 5 victims
- 23:15:41, FOLLOWUP, Boston (20032994)
- 23:21:28, Cambridge located suspect vehicle
- 23:31:28, FOLLOWUP, Cambridge (20032998)

- Unit unavailable
- 2 or fewer cars providing city-wide coverage
- Unit available

	22:45	22:50	22:55	23:00	23:05	23:10	23:15	23:20	23:25	23:30	23:35	23:40	23:45	23:50	23:55	0:00	0:05	0:10	0:15	0:20	0:25	0:30	0:35	0:40	0:45	0:50
E1																										
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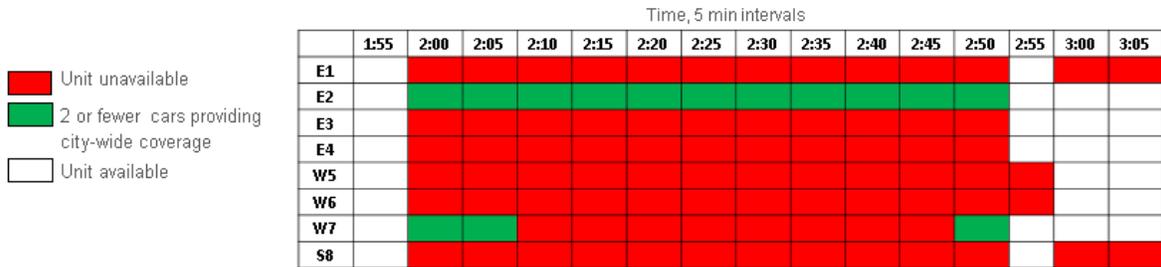
### EXAMPLE 2

#### Scenario:

*“Shooting that took place on February 24, 2020 at 1:58 AM. Officers were responding to reports of a fight outside 7 Memorial Rd when there was a ShotSpotter activation for two rounds near 500 Mystic Ave as well as a Shots Fired call near 25 Memorial Rd. Dispatch updated officers that a white SUV was seen leaving area occupied 3 times. Units responded to the multiple locations and seven minutes later, there was a call for a suspicious vehicle on Bailey Rd with its rear window smashed. Car 7 was dispatched leaving one area car to cover the city. Approximately 35 minutes later, Officers located two males, one a juvenile, hiding underneath vehicles in the area of 480 Mystic Ave. Other officers recovered ballistic evidence at another location. Unit 7 located the vehicle that a resident reported and oversaw the towing of evidence.”*

## 2/24/20 Armed Assault to Murder (Shooting), Last Half

- 1:58 **FIGHT outside, 7 Memorial Rd (20010331)**
- 2:00 SUV occupied 5 or 6 times driving onto Temple St.
- 2:01 **SHOTS, 25C Memorial Rd (20010332)**
- 2:01 2 gunshots, area of 500 Mystic Ave
- 2:08 **SUSPICIOUS VEHICLE, Baily Rd (20010333)**
- 2:09 White Jeep running - rear window smashed
- 2:12 Lights on, MV off - Officer to check the area
- 2:43 Individuals located under vehicles in 480 Mystic Ave garage
- 2:53 Juvenile transported to station by W5 - W6 to follow
- 2:57 **FOLLOWUP, 25 Memorial Rd (20010334)**
- 3:06 **TOWMV, 30 Memorial Rd (20010335)**



### Staffing – Vacancies - What that Means

Additional vacancies have opened since the January 20<sup>th</sup> CAPM Committee meeting, and another is anticipated in the coming weeks. Based on current staffing levels, the following patrol functions will remain vacant during the upcoming calendar year to properly staff the patrol division.

<b>PATROL FUNCTIONS</b>	
Neighborhood PO 1	(VACANT (1))
Neighborhood PO 2	(VACANT (2))
Neighborhood PO 3	(VACANT (3))
Neighborhood PO 4	(VACANT (4))
Traffic Officer	(VACANT (5))
Assembly Row	(VACANT (6))
Assembly Row	(VACANT (7))

The Criminal Investigations Division is understaffed by three positions, as listed below.

<b>CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION</b>	
Gang Unit Officer	(VACANT 8)
Detective Days	(VACANT 9)
Detective Days Family Services	(VACANT 10)

### Patrol Vacancies

- **Neighborhood Police Officers** – Additional NPO officers would be placed into geographic areas to serve as a direct contact with city council members, community leaders, and citizens. These officers would be tasked with community policing involvement to address issues identified by the community within their respective areas.
- **Traffic Officer** - This officer would be responsible for directly investigating traffic crashes, conducting enforcement, and educating the motoring public. Traffic officers are vital to the Vision Zero initiative.
- **Assembly Row** – Officers assigned to this area played an important role as liaisons to the Assembly Row residents and business owners. The department would ideally have two officers assigned in this area.

Many of the business owners had direct contact with these officers through the officers' personal cellular numbers. These relationships played a critical role in crime prevention such as professional shoplifting rings traveling from state to state.

During the upcoming year the officer formerly assigned to this position was reassigned to patrol due to additional staffing shortages.

### **Criminal Investigations Division Vacancies**

- **Gang Officer** - vacant position is based on the need to backfill the patrol division. The City is experiencing a high volume of gang activity between Somerville and Cambridge. Gang members from both cities are associated with the recent increase in shooting incidents and shots fired calls in 2020. Gang activity is currently monitored by the Narcotic Division in addition to their regular duties.
- **Day Detective** – this investigator specializes in credit card fraud and identity theft. They would also be responsible for crime prevention and public awareness campaigns to combat this problem and reduce victimization.
- **Family Service Detective** – this detective would be responsible for working with domestic violence and sexual assault survivors. Also, they would update the Sexual Offender registry to comply with Massachusetts general laws.

### **Conclusion**

I urge the City Council to confirm 9 candidates to the reserve list. Most of these officers (7 out of 10) will need to attend and successfully complete a 26-week police academy. Of course, this does not guarantee all officers will pass the requirements. This would allow the police

department to fill its existing vacancies, reduce the number of forced holdovers, and ensure public safety in the community.

Once these positions are filled, I look forward to working with city officials in creating a bridge toward the concepts of reimagining policing for the City of Somerville.