

New Bedford Police Department releases strategic plan

At a press conference at City Hall, Mayor Jon Mitchell and Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro announced the findings of a strategic plan and organizational assessment of the New Bedford Police Department, which was submitted to the Department this month.

Last year, Mayor Jon Mitchell announced that the Police Department would undergo a strategic planning exercise. He underscored the review of the Department in his State of the City address at New Bedford High School in March 2018. "We're undertaking a thorough and candid self-assessment because we want our department go from good to great," Mayor Mitchell said in his address, noting that the last strategic plan for the Police Department had occurred more than 20 years ago, and as a result of a lawsuit. The new plan, sought proactively by the Department, was completed by Public Safety Strategies Group, LLC, a firm led by public safety management expert and former police officer Kym Craven.

The current assessment and strategic plan was a proactive exercise to seek recommendations on strengthening operations of the Department. It provides third-party, public safety management recommendations that would bring the New Bedford Police Department fully in line with 21st century policing practices.

To compile the data in the report and complete its assessment, Public Safety Strategies Group's team conducted four separate site visits, each several days long, and conducted interviews with police department employees, municipal department heads, stakeholder agencies, community organizations, and members of the community. The team met with interview participants that

they selected, as well as some suggested by the Department.

The review includes findings on organizational structure and culture, goals and performance measures, facilities and operations, equipment, communications, the Department's various units and divisions, and finances.

Among the recommendations, the report suggests that the Police Department:

- Consider reorganizing the narcotics and gang units under the purview of Criminal Investigations.
- Allow for the chief to appoint command staff.
- Continue to expand mobile cameras to address crime and monitor critical events.
- Secure new mapping software.
- Create a funding plan for cruiser replacement for the Department's vehicle fleet.
- Evaluate facilities and determine the best location(s) for modern police facilities.
- Secure funding to increase the training budget.
- Civilianizing certain positions, including the management information systems position.
- Consider automated recordkeeping to ensure accountability and address the time-consuming nature of manual recordkeeping.
- Continue to evaluate its opioid task force and deployment of mental health professionals in diversion programs.

"This assessment is useful for a police department that is always striving to operate effectively and innovatively," said Mayor Jon Mitchell. "A strategic plan will inform the critical operational, financial and facilities decisions with which the New Bedford Police Department is faced, and it will help the department fulfill its mission of continuous improvement, capitalizing on its strengths and addressing areas that need restructuring."

"The recommendations will serve as a guideline for the Police

Department moving forward,” said Chief Joseph Cordeiro. “There are helpful suggestions and areas of improvement, as well as acknowledgements of the department’s progress in key areas, such as our leadership on the opioid crisis and our successful use of cameras in targeted ways. We are grateful to Public Safety Strategies Group for its comprehensive look at every level of the Department, and its assessment of our operations.”