

Police Chief Oliveira announces findings of review of New Bedford Police Department

“New Bedford Police Chief Paul Oliveira announced the release of a comprehensive review of the City’s Police Department by Jensen Hughes, a global consultancy known for its law enforcement expertise.

Robert Wasserman, one of the nation’s preeminent policing experts and a former Jensen Hughes Senior Vice President, oversaw the preparation of the Department’s review and joined the Chief at today’s announcement.

Background

With New Bedford having seen a sustained general decline in crime rates over the past decade, Chief Oliveira determined that further progress required a fresh, independent assessment of how the Department was functioning. Jensen Hughes was subsequently retained to conduct such a review, identify areas for improvement, and propose practices and policies that are proving effective at leading departments across the nation—with a focus on areas that help strengthen trust between the police and residents.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The review found that, in general, the New Bedford Police Department is performing well, and that the Department should continue to modernize and align its practices with the principles of 21st Century Policing, a policy framework designed to address the erosion of confidence in police departments nationally in the wake of several high-profile police interactions.

The study goes on to identify dozens of potential structural, operational, and policy changes, broken down by functional area, including a redesign of patrol-related responsibilities; hiring of more crime analysts; separate bargaining units for supervisors and line officers; consolidation of Station 3 and Police Headquarters; and a reduction of false alarms.

Findings & Recommendations Underway

In the course of the two-year review period and drafting of the report, Wasserman and his co-authors encouraged the Chief to begin implementation of key reforms ahead of the formal completion of the review. Three examples of these recommendations, now in various stages of implementation, appear in the final report as follows:

- **Make salaries more competitive.** “The starting salary for new officers should be raised to a current second step and to match what surrounding communities are offering new officers. In doing this, the number of pay steps for an employee to reach a normal maximum salary should be reduced. Salary and benefits should be combined in a way to support higher retention of officers, and consideration should be given to providing incentives to officers having 20 or more years of service to encourage remaining on the job.” (page 26)
- **Introduce body cameras.** “The City and police department recognizes the importance of body cameras both to build public trust and support officers. The City is attempting to negotiate issues concerning body-worn cameras through collective bargaining.” (page 35)
- **Restructure key leadership positions.** “The non-union position of superintendent should be established for two senior management positions. One should oversee all field operations and services working from the two police stations. Another position should oversee all other support functions in the development. The deputy chief should remain in charge of internal affairs and use of force reviews.” (page 16)

[Note: In the period during which the report was being finalized, Mayor Jon Mitchell and the Police Union agreed to a substantial increase in salaries and the adoption of body cameras, as part of a new collective bargaining agreement—thus removing a potential impediment to the implementation of these reforms.]

In his remarks Chief Oliveira put the Jensen Hughes review in context, noting “The landscape of the law enforcement profession is fluid, and there has been no time in recent history where changes have occurred so rapidly as in the past few years. Assessments like these provide a fresh set of eyes to address existing problems and foresee those that have yet to be realized.”

The Chief added, “Taking the totality of all circumstances into consideration, we appear to be in good shape. Several recommendations are already being implemented. And while I’m encouraged by the report, as the Chief, it is incumbent on me to ensure that this Department continually works to adapt, evolve, and improve. I see this assessment as a blueprint that will help me, my leadership team, and my officers on the front line, continue to bring positive changes to our Department and the City we serve.”

Background on Jensen Hughes

Jensen Hughes is global consulting company, with a specialized law enforcement practice that evaluates police departments and offers expert counsel on topics ranging from policing strategy, to risk mitigation, and operational best practices. Jensen Hughes recently completed assessments of police departments in Wichita, Kansas, and Columbus, Georgia, as well as a comprehensive review of the Louisville Metro Police Department following the Breonna Taylor shooting. The firm also produced an after-action report of the Minneapolis’ response to civil unrest following the death of George Floyd.

Background on Robert Wasserman

One of the leading policing experts in America, and former Jensen Hughes Senior Vice President, Robert Wasserman served as the lead project manager of the New Bedford Police Department assessment.

Robert Wasserman is a lifelong and internationally recognized expert in law enforcement affairs and community relations. He previously served as a Senior Advisor on International Law Enforcement for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement at the U. S. Department of State and served as Chief of Staff of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

He served in Bosnia following the war, as both Deputy Commissioner for Operations and Acting Commissioner of the United Nations International Police Task Force. Wasserman has had an extensive career in law enforcement, having served as a senior executive in several large American police agencies, including Dayton, Boston and Houston. During the course of his career, he has been the initiator or at the forefront of a number of seminal policing initiatives, including 311 and differential police response, police performance management (CompStat), neighborhood-oriented policing, the Kansas City Patrol Experiments, Dayton Team Policing, the San Diego Beat Profiling initiative, the Boston Community Disorders strategy and the Police Recruit Training Year. Mr. Wasserman did his undergraduate work in sociology at Antioch College and his graduate work in Police Administration at Michigan State University.

The full report is available on the Department's website: www.newbedfordpd.com"