

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
ANCHORAGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 18, 1994
TO: Duane S. Udland
Deputy Chief of Police

FROM: Captain Laren J. Zager
Commander, Staff Services

SUBJECT: Analysis of Shifting Alternatives for Patrol

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

You requested that I collect and assess certain data to evaluate how best to deploy our human resource in Patrol. This project ultimately translates to a comparison of the 10 hour shifts that Patrol currently works with alternative shifting. This is a report of that investigation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

General:

The recent past has seen a converging of several unique events having debilitating consequences: There has been a remarkable reduction of the municipal budget with further reductions on the horizon (less municipal revenue sharing); a recent increase in the police service area, but without proportionate staffing; and a spate of vacant sworn positions that remain unfilled due in part to a stagnation in resolving the "unfunded medical liability" issue, to name a few.

Certainly, there will be further reductions in spending by the department. However, this conflicts with certain other realities: After responding to so many earlier calls for budget reduction, the sole remaining targets for further decreases are salary/benefits. Absent the most extreme responses -- layoffs and negotiated reductions in base salary and/or benefits -- controlling overtime is the only answer left.

But how does an administration reduce overtime while given insufficient staffing? Worse, how is this done in an environment that is call for even more police services?

Clearly, understaffing is the central and underlying problem facing the Anchorage Police Department today.

CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of understaffing are not limited to merely having the remaining staff work harder, or to simply having production slow down. Insufficient personnel at the Anchorage Police Department have caused at least:

Deficiencies in the delivery of police services: Without sufficient officers, our response times are higher; the crime suppression effects of "omnipresence" suffers; our crime resolution rate diminishes (through lack of investigation); and certain services are discontinued entirely, or reduced to having the citizen fill out his/her own report.

Overtime expenses: When insufficient personnel are scheduled for work, "backfilling" is necessary. As this study will show, this department has to spend in excess of a half a million dollars each year in overtime for one purpose: call-in to satisfy minimum manning on patrol.

Although this problem could technically be resolved by hiring sufficient additional officers to eliminate the need for backfilling, such a plan has fatal flaws:

1. The cost of the new officers would consume most of those overtime expenses they are designed to eliminate--thus netting a zero gain--since new positions require both salary and benefits plus there are the start up costs of training and outfitting those people. By example, 10 officers on consistent overtime might be earning/costing time and a half or double time of their salary for that period, but because they are already trained and equipped, and since their benefits packages are, essentially, already paid, their overtime cost is at least competitive with the combined costs (salary, benefits, training, equipping) of filling new positions to avoid that overtime.
2. The social climate makes getting authorization and appropriations to hire new sworn positions seem unlikely in the near future, as such things as the unfunded medical liability and controversy over "overpaid officers" still rages. Certainly there is a pressure for more officers, but not under the existing wage and benefit package. How long it will take to resolve this is unknown but, once resolved, we know it takes over a year to recruit, test, select, and train sworn personnel. It could take literally years to see an actual increase in our sworn strength.

Another suggestion for resolving call-in overtime is to merely stop calling in -- just work with fewer people. This, however, worsens the officer safety and the response time issues, it disallows granting of annual leave, it further reduces officer presence (omnipresence), and demoralizes and fatigues the officers even more. It simply doesn't "cure" the underlying problem -- the need for enough people to do the job without calling in overtime.

Officer safety and morale: With inadequate staffing, units are not as available to back up each other, and when officer assistance is needed, response time is greater. Without enough people, officers only rarely get annual leave approved. They understandably find it discouraging to go to a call, take an extensive report, and know that it will go to investigations to simply get suspended. Not only is that wasted work, but most officers are genuinely demoralized by not being able to help their public. Along with excessive work and overtime come employee fatigue, and with

fatigue comes carelessness and shorter tempers. We know too that, when there is sufficient police presence, many problems are solved before they develop, yet we cannot always avail ourselves of this tool.

CONCLUSION

The circle is complete. Without enough staff, services diminish, and the public becomes dissatisfied. That dissatisfaction gets transmitted politically to reduction of funds. Employees see an abandonment by the public and government that they serve. Attitudes become more polar and protective.

If the Anchorage Police Department can devise some way of putting more officers on the street -- without hiring more and without paying more -- this cycle can be broken.

This is a challenging goal, asking the alchemy of turning 163 sworn officers into 200. If the givens are accepted -- having more people resolves a plethora of problems, but money and circumstances do not allow an unbridled expansion -- then the only target is when and how the current staffing is deployed. This analysis, therefore, becomes one of analyzing the possible shifting and staffing alternatives.

SHIFT ANALYSIS

Current "4/10's:"

The current system of 10 hour shifts offers an impressive list of advantages, but at a price. With three shifts of 10 hours each, at least the following is gained:

1. Each shift has a two hour overlap with the previous shift, creating an ideal time for briefing, training, report writing, and other administrative functions, and to do so at straight time pay. Properly administered, that overlap time could be expanded to include vehicle maintenance periods and other such functions.
2. This overlap also provides "power periods" should an emergency or special project arise. Even if the "old" shift must be held over, at least they are ready (in uniform, equipped, and mobile) to meet the emergency.
3. With the previous shift being relieved by the oncoming shift "early" (that is, before the end of the 10 hour period), the risk of a last minute call -- a call that could incur overtime -- is minimized.
4. Being 10 hour shifts, employees satisfy a 40 hour workweek in 4 days instead of the conventional 5. This creates several advantages:
 - a. Home cars are used to commute to work only 4 times a week instead of 5.
 - b. Uniforms are cleaned less.

- c. There are only 4 meal allowances to pay per week instead of 5. Under existing staffing, that is a savings of \$42,380.00 per year.
- d. The 3 day weekends are extremely popular with employees, and provide an excellent rest period from a stressful job.

Inherent in 10 hour shifting are at least the following disadvantages:

1. Overlapping the shifts by two hours each means that, for 6 hours each day, there is double staffing in Patrol. This causes the city to pay 30 hours salary for 24 hours of coverage each day of the year. This is particularly expensive during paid holidays: For the last 5 holidays, the extra 6 hours pay per holiday cost the department \$28,265.49 for patrol officers only. With 11.5 holidays per year, that translates to \$65,010.63 per year, plus the supervisory staff. At minimum staffing, the 10 hour shifts generate about \$70,000.00 per year in extra holiday salaries.
2. With the 4 day workweek, any one employee is scheduled to work only 4/7th of the time (4 out of 7 days per week), or 57.14% of the 7 day total work week. Contrasting, an 8 hour shift with 5 work days makes each employee available 5/7th of the time, or 71.43% of the 7 day work week. To appreciate this difference, imagine a pool of 100 patrol officers, and a sergeant making out the shift roster. With 4/10's, the sergeant would have 57 people daily to draw from (different people on different days, but always about 57 total). With 5/8's the sergeant would always have a pool of 71 people to draw from on any given day. That is 14 more people, or a 24.56% increase in staffing.
3. The advantage listed earlier of one less commute per week on the home cars is at least partially offset by the increased availability for personal use on the extra weekend day. This is not to imply that the home cars are being abused with that third day off, or should not be used for personal use -- only that the personal use, which the department encourages, subtracts from the advantage of reducing the number of commuting times a home car experiences in any given period.
4. With a 4 day workweek, the chances of court falling on a day off is 1/7th greater than with a 5 day work week. Although small, being called into court on a day off contributes to overtime expense, and disrupts the officer's weekend.

5/8's Analysis:

Like the 4/10's plan or any other system, 5/8's has both good and bad. Continuing the format, the following is a partial list of the advantages of 5/8's:

1. As described, 5/8's will eliminate the extra pay over holidays, demonstrated above at about \$70,000.00 per year.
2. Indisputably, 5/8's will give at least a 24% increase in staffing availability. This may not be totally realized since greater amounts of annual leave could then be given (an advantage in

itself, listed below), but the increase in staffing will certainly eliminate the need for call-in overtime.

On July 14, 1994, our Payroll Section hand-counted the call-in overtime for Patrol for the period of January 1, 1994, to July 10, 1994, revealing \$253,912.00 was paid for this type of overtime exclusively. Projected over a full year period, that amount would rise to \$575,640. Combined with the Holiday overtime savings, 5/8's would -- not "might" or "could" -- save \$645,600 per year (see also the "disadvantages" section of this report next, as certain new costs are assumed that reduces this amount).

3. There would be a slight reduction in court overtime costs, as more employees (especially day shift personnel) would have less risk of court on a day off.
4. Although not readily appreciated because of the loss of the three day weekends, there are, nonetheless, advantages to the employees. These include:
 - a. As mentioned in #3 above, there is slightly less chance of a disruption of a weekend with court duties.
 - b. When an employee calls in sick for a shift, or takes a day of annual leave, only 8 hours are deducted from the leave bank instead of 10. This is not an advantage when increments of a week or longer are taken, since those are 40 hour blocks under either system.
 - c. The work days are, necessarily, shorter. Not only does this reduce fatigue during the shift, but it does provide more "evening" time after work.
 - d. As mentioned, the added staffing allows a significantly more liberal leave granting policy. Time off will simply be more available, and -- as previously mentioned -- when taken in units of less than one week (40 hours), actually saves the employees annual leave bank.

SUMMARY

This analysis reaches the obvious conclusion that understaffing at the Anchorage Police Department is a problem; that it is a dire and fundamental problem; and that it creates a wake of "spin off" problems in its path. The key is to provide sufficient staff to do the job.

This analysis also concludes that a conversion to 5/8's shifting will provide larger and sufficient numbers of personnel to properly staff patrol shifts. It, in fact, turns 163 patrol officers currently on 4/10's into the equivalent of 203, and it does this without magic: It merely removes the 6 hours per day of double staffing during the overlap on 10 hour shifts, and re-deploys that time elsewhere.

Finally, this analysis concludes that nothing is without a price, and 5/8's will not come cheaply. It would be a major, disruptive change to the people, and it incurs some new expenses. It is to this administration to decide if the product is worth the price.