

MEMORANDUM

To: Community Services (Officer) Staffing Task Force

From: Mark A. Ramion, Legislative Fiscal Analyst

Re: Community Service Officer Background

January 27, 2006

Introduction

This information is provided as initial background for the task for considering the feasibility and application of "Community Service Officers" for the enhancement of public safety in the city of Milwaukee. This initiative is to develop alternatives to traditional sworn policing as a response to all calls for service customarily conducted by a sworn officer. In various parts of the United States, some communities are rethinking traditional police efforts and shifting uniformed resources as needed.

Historical Information

The concept of a Community Service Officer (CSO), while not necessarily new, received prominent attention in 1967 with the publication of the findings of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (Commission). Among its various charges, the Commission was tasked with examining the role of police in the community, especially in the wake of the civil unrest experienced by several U.S. cities in the 1960's. Among several recommendations submitted, the establishment of "Community Service Officers" was urged in order to create additional sets of "eyes and ears" in neighborhoods, especially those that were experiencing a disproportionate share of the urban problems of a particular city.

In its *Task Force on Police*, the Commission viewed the creation of CSOs as offering a neighborhood presence that would address citizen complaints of a non-urgent nature and respond to service calls that were considered not dangerous. The Commission, as a primary concern, understood many urban police forces to be predominately white male entities with little or no understanding of minority issues or concerns. The Commission urged creating the CSO with the view of improving service in the minority neighborhoods, relieving sworn officers of "lesser" duties, increasing urban police-oriented staffing and, as a by-product, increasing opportunity for minorities as these CSOs were envisioned as being members of the minority community served.

In 1973, The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, Task Force on Police (Task Force) continued the advocacy for increasing "civilianization" of police departments throughout the country. The position of the Task Force was that creating civilian positions in police departments would assist in diversifying the internal culture of the department as well as freeing-up sworn personnel

for law enforcement. In this sense, the concept of the CSO was continued as a term for civilianization both within the police department and as an adjunct for quasi-police services in the community. In many cities, especially in California, traffic and parking enforcement traditionally conducted by sworn officers now became the purview of the CSO. Some cities employed CSOs as jail security or prisoner transport officers. In Dallas Texas, the CSO was stationed in a storefront office in the neighborhood and conducted counseling related to job and welfare services. These CSOs conducted community meetings and served as liaisons between the police department and the neighborhood.

This historical information related to police department civilianization and the development of the CSO serves as a backdrop to demonstrate the interest of various levels of government in seeking new and improved ways of diversifying police departments, relating to the community and of determining the most efficient and appropriate ways of utilizing the police force in light of the changing understandings of what is expected of its sworn members. Of primary concern, however, in the deployment of civilians in any police role, is that the education received by the civilian must be commensurate with the job duties that the civilian will be expected to perform.

As the examples of various cities that utilize CSOs demonstrate, the idea behind the civilian officer has evolved to address the concerns of respective communities and meet the expectations for police and enforcement services desired while identifying and reserving appropriate activities to trained sworn personnel.

2006 City Budget

An amendment to the 2006 budget for the City, adopted by the Common Council and signed by the Mayor, included the establishment of a "Community Service Staffing" Special Purpose Account for public safety related purposes or police overtime, including costs associated with community service staff and services within the police department. This new SPA is to utilize 2006 police department overtime funds and is footnoted that no funds may be expended without Common Council approval.

This SPA will fund a process, through the creation of a task force, to investigate means and methods, appropriate for the city of Milwaukee, that would lead to community service staffing for public safety needs as well as to provide funds for the eventual implementation of new staffing models for responding to Milwaukee residents' calls for service directed to the police department.

The process further provides for a written report to be submitted to the Common Council, four months from the adoption of this resolution, for Council review and appropriate action and direction relating to allocations from the special purpose account.

Common Council File Number 050956 implementing provisions relating to the establishment of a Community Service Staffing Special Purpose Account for public

safety related proposes or police overtime in the 2006 City budget is attached to this memo.

“Community Service Officers”

A review of various communities throughout the United States revealed that the use of the position title “Community Service Officers,” is one of several that are used to describe the duties of a non-sworn, public safety position. The following position titles are examples of this community public safety position:

- Public Safety Officer
- Community Service Officer
- Public Safety Worker
- Community Service Worker
- Police Service Officer

Additionally, in various communities, these positions undertake job duties that are not unlike the following existing positions, some not specifically related to public safety, found in Milwaukee:

- MPD Police Aides
- MPD Auxiliaries
- MPD School Crossing Guards
- DPW Parking Checkers
- MPD Police Recruits
- Downtown Ambassadors
- DNS Inspectors
- DPW Sanitation Supervisors

The common feature among municipalities that employ civilian public safety officers include the active support of the municipal police and other departmental staff with the stated avoidance of involving the incumbents of these positions in serious or dangerous law enforcement situations. These community positions have no arrest powers, may not carry weapons (although some carry pepper spray for self-defense) and may not respond to calls with an emergency status. Enforcement powers are generally related to parking control.

In October 2005, Alderman Terry Witkowski conducted an informal e-mail request for information asking municipalities and jurisdictions throughout the country about their experiences with “Community Service Officers” i.e., non –sworn civilians who have received classroom and field training for the purpose of responding to low-priority assignments to free sworn officers for higher priority calls.

The e-mail responses are attached to this memo.

Without exception, all of the respondents spoke very highly about the positive contributions that Community Service Officers made to their respective departments, jurisdictions and municipalities. The worth and significance of these officers were highlighted by the time saved for sworn officers for high priority duties, the positive public presence of the police department to the community represented by the community officers, the community officers as being “eyes and ears” for the police department, the pool that these officers provided for promotion to the sworn ranks, and the flexibility of range of duties, including office duties, that these officers provide for their respective departments.

In the responses, only three “negative” comments were made about the community officers: sometimes being “radio-happy,” being non-discriminate when calling for a sworn officer and, a high rate of turnover.

For the most part, communities that deploy civilian community/public safety officers are able to mold the position to meet the express needs of the community with duties ranging from “meeting and greeting” the public to parking and traffic control to completing post-incident reports of a less serious nature, e.g., a burglary or stolen auto.

Please note the following and varied examples of the use of non-sworn community/public safety officers:

- Camden, MO – Animal control, school truancy enforcement, police related errands.
- Menasha, WI – Animal complaints, traffic and parking control, minor ordinance violations, support to police staff.
- Oshkosh, WI – Duties resemble that of the current MPD police aide with primary emphasis on office duties and assistance.
- Mount Pleasant, SC – Parking enforcement and citations; traffic accident investigations but not traffic citations; post incident report-taking; school crossing duty.
- Monterey Park, CA – Community relations, primarily to non-English speaking citizens.
- Jacksonville, FL – Serve as police assistants directing traffic, enforcing litter laws and investigating traffic accidents. This position serves as a transitional one as the incumbents form a recruit pool for sworn officer candidates.
- Oklahoma City, OK – Developed a Community Service Corps from a Local Law Enforcement Block Grant. This is an 18-month pilot program to hire “meet and greet” ambassadors for downtown. This is primarily a public information position, however, placed under the authority of the police department to serve as “eyes and ears” in the community.

These examples demonstrate the variety of duties that “community” officers have undertaken in some municipalities. Common to each of these examples is the formation of the community service position to meet the stated need that required attention. These positions were based and titled upon the duties that the community wanted to address.

Additionally, in each of these examples, the authority was based in the law enforcement sector although the duties carried out were not necessarily law enforcement related.

Larger U.S. Cities with “Community Service Officers”

As the intention of the Community Service Officer initiative is to develop civilian assistance for the Milwaukee Police Department, especially as this assistance relates to addressing calls for service of a non-emergency-non-urgent nature, the most appropriate considerations will be to explore alternatives for this position as they relate to the police department.

The following larger cities in the United States employ the use of Community Service Officers as assistance to the respective police department and undertake duties that would normally be, but not exclusively, reserved to the police department:

1. Minneapolis, MN

Minneapolis uses a Community Service Officer position as a transition to a full time police officer.

A Community Service Officer (CSO) works 20 hours per week in the Minneapolis Police Department while enrolled as a full-time student in an approved, two-year Law Enforcement Program. The City pays for all college tuition and books. CSOs assist the police department in a variety of non-enforcement activities. After CSOs successfully complete academic and fitness training, they may be eligible for promotion to full time police officer.

The salary range for this position is \$12.52-15.75/hour plus full tuition. The candidate must have a high school diploma or GED and be eligible for enrollment as a student in a *Law Enforcement Training Program*.

2. Orlando, FL

The Community Service Officer CSO Unit was initially created in 1983 to assist patrol officers from time consuming duties such as traffic crash reports, disabled vehicles, animal complaints and non-violent “over with” calls, e.g., burglaries.

Currently, the entire CSO Unit consists of three squads answering such calls as: burglaries, missing persons, theft, vandalisms, stolen vehicles, recovered stolen vehicles, traffic direction and a majority of the traffic crashes, ranging from minor fender benders up to and inclusive of traffic fatalities. The CSO Unit also handles a majority of the forgeries at banks and various businesses. The CSO is the “eyes and ears” for any suspicious activity, with the communications ability to summon sworn police officers if the need arises.

The starting salary for this position is \$11.58 per hour.

Orlando uses the CSO in a full time capacity and incumbents are able to advance to another law enforcement position, including police officer, if they so choose.

Information related to Community Service Officers in Orlando Florida is attached to this memo.

3. Eugene, OR

This city's "Community Policing Support Team" bolsters the enforcement work of patrol officers by taking many kinds of reports, performing patrol support at accidents and crime scenes, and providing crime-prevention education and other community services. The concept behind this support team is to afford the police department the ability to provide a wider range of services, while maintaining the number of sworn patrol officers available for urgent calls.

CSOs take many police reports where there are no "hot" leads or suspects, and immediate investigative follow-up is not critical. For example, when a citizen telephones or walks into the police station or community service station to report an overnight car break-in, typically a CSO will take the report. Other examples where the CSO will take a report include runaway juveniles, bicycle thefts, telephone harassment, missing persons, criminal mischief and vandalism, juvenile shoplifting, missing vehicles, forgery or fraud reports, and identity theft. CSOs also regularly collect and process recovered stolen property.

The starting salary for this position is \$15.09 per hour. Additionally, Eugene employs the use of three distinct and graduated levels of CSO with each grade assuming a higher level of responsibility.

4. Seattle, WA

Positions in this class, Community Service Officer, under general police department supervision, perform a variety of law enforcement-related community services work that does not require the enforcement authority of a sworn police officer. Community Service Officers patrol an assigned area of the city on foot or in a vehicle, serving populations such as dysfunctional families, the homeless, disabled, runaway youth, and the elderly. They mediate disputes between family members, neighbors, landlords and tenants; provide basic counseling; make referrals to assisting agencies and programs; maintain a caseload of juvenile runaways; investigate reports of child abuse; participate in crime prevention activities, and prepare a variety of incident reports.

The starting salary for this position is \$21.32 per hour.

Salary Ranges

In general, and through a review of approximately 30 municipalities that employ community service/civilian public safety positions, starting salaries range from \$9.47/hour in Virginia Beach, VA to \$24.46 in Glendale, CA. The high end of the hourly salary range for an experienced Community Service Officer was \$25.74 in Hayward, CA.

Requirements for the “Community Service Officer”

In the various instances where community service officers are employed, especially in the larger cities noted, the following requirements were articulated for this position:

- Knowledge, skills and abilities required and minimum age

These ranged from minimum age of 18 years with a high school diploma or GED, and a valid driver's license. One city required a baccalaureate degree. Some required residency, others did not. In some instances, a civil service exam was administered as part of the application process.

- Health and psychological status

All required a physical exam, with generally accepted standards for health including corrected eyesight parameters and good hearing. Drug screens were required and some required a psychological exam.

- Background

All required a background check with no felony convictions, a good driving record, good personal character and an acceptable employment history. Some required a polygraph to verify application and other information provided by the applicant.

Other issues

The following bear consideration during the course of discussion and investigation as to the feasibility and potential deployment of Community Service Officers in the city of Milwaukee:

- Will this position be considered permanent or transitional to police officer, a part time or full time position?
- What training, standards and curriculum will be needed based upon the specific position duties?
- What uniforms, equipment and vehicles will be used in order to distinguish the Community Service Officer from the sworn police officer?
- What badge will be provided?
- What defensive and protective measures will be provided?

- What powers will be afforded and withheld related to laws and enforcement and the relationship to MPD?
- How will this position be integrated into MPD culture?
- What will be the methods of community education if this position is implemented?
- Can any of the existing positions currently active in the city be reconsidered or reclassified to be “Community Service Officers?”
- What will be the most appropriate title for this position after the job duties are determined?
- To what extent will this position be integrated into MPD regarding supervision and oversight? Will these positions have their own supervisory structure? Will the Fire and Police Commission provide the top-level oversight?
- What will be the level of background information required for candidates to this position?
- Are any state statutes required for review?