

Police
INDIVIDUAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT
In Response to a Request for Technical Assistance by the
Forest Hill, Texas, Police Department

October 24, 1972

34/232
Prepared by:

**Public Administration Service
1313 East 60th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637**

(Per Contract J-LEAA-015-72)

I. PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

A. Consultant Assigned:

Joseph J. Molcup
Principal Associate
Public Administration Service

B. Date Assignment Received:

August 8, 1972

C. Date of Contact with LEAA Regional Coordinator:

August 14, 1972

D. Dates of On-Site Consultation:

September 19, 20, and 21, 1972

E. Individuals Interviewed:

Glenn R. Lightford, Chief
Forest Hill Police Department

William B. Pierce
City Manager
City of Forest Hill, Texas

James S. Kline
Director of Police Training
North Central Texas Regional Police Academy

Fred W. Keithley
Director of Criminal Justice
North Central Texas Council of Governments

Lieutenant Bicknell
Officer-in-Charge, Research and Services
Fort Worth Police and Fire Training Center

Frank L. Priore
Personnel Director
Fort Worth Civil Service Commission and Personnel Department

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A. Problem as per Request for Technical Assistance:

The Forest Hill Police Department requested funds for a consultant to assist in developing a merit system and improved recruitment, promotion, and separation procedures. LEAA Region VI determined that the Department's request could best be met by technical assistance services made available through LEAA contracted consultants.

B. Problems Actually Observed:

Within the prevailing administrative structure of the City, authority in personnel affairs is highly concentrated in the City Manager and such department heads, as the Police Chief, to whom the Manager has delegated a broad mandate in personnel matters. In these circumstances, there is a legitimate concern about formalizing employee selection, promotion, and separation procedures to the extent that they provide a factual basis for, or evidence of, adherence to merit principles by responsible officials. At the same time, the desired degree of formalization should not extend to the point where it becomes burdensome, administratively inhibiting, or unduly costly. From the employee's point of view, the personnel instruments and procedures governing entry, promotion, and separation should fairly assess job qualifications, the quality of job performance, and should not be impediments to staff development and morale nor a facade for arbitrary personnel actions.

III. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

- A. The Forest Hill Police Department has 17 members: the Chief, two sergeants, one investigator, six patrolmen, one warrant officer, four dispatchers, one secretary/records clerk, and one animal control officer.
- B. The present Police Chief was appointed in September, 1971. Since that time he has sought to upgrade the quality of the Department. During this process, there has occurred the separation of one captain, two sergeants, and three patrolmen. The separations were attributable to two causes: (1) disciplinary in four cases; and (2) higher pay in another police department in two cases.
- C. A result of the improvement efforts is that many of the new members of the Department are young (25 to 32 years of age) and offer good potential.
- D. Except for the Chief, the force possesses only modest experience as exemplified by the service profile of patrolmen: (1) three officers with less than one year of service; (2) two officers with one and one-half years of service; and (3) one officer with three and one-half years of service. The service range for the two sergeants is three to four years.
- E. In their commitment to improve the Department, the Chief and City Manager are confronted with severely limited financial resources and manpower in an urban location, increasingly experiencing police problems characteristic of major metropolitan centers. In these circumstances, entry selection procedures and staff development measures must be adequate but modest in cost and in their demands on available manpower.
- F. The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education prescribes specific requirements for entry into local police service and requires jurisdictions to file reports of appointees covering: (1) personal information; (2) fingerprints and questionable arrests; (3) personal history investigation; (4) education; (5) physical examination; and (6) oral interview. A mental examination is optional.
- G. The Commission also requires the completion of formal course work for state certification within the first year of employment.

H. Neighboring police training resources: the North Central Texas Regional Police Academy in Arlington, Texas, provides a basic course in applied police science of 350 hours (11 weeks) and an intermediate course of 35 hours. In addition, the Fort Worth Police and Fire Training Center provides a 16-week curriculum for police trainees. Both of these institutions represent valuable training resources in close proximity to the Department.

I. Present selection practices of the Department.

1. No special recruitment efforts are made by the Department. When a vacancy exists, word-of-mouth is generally sufficient to produce applicants. In general, this has resulted in few top quality candidates and produced, in some cases, highly undesirable ones.
2. The first screening stage is the analysis of the application for apparent conformity with the minimum requirements stipulated by the Chief. These are in general consonance with standards prescribed by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education.
3. Applicants who apparently meet the City's requirements are investigated and application information verified.
4. Those applicants, for whom investigation fails to reveal disqualifying information, are interviewed by a five-man oral board consisting of departmental representatives and one or more private citizens. This body makes a general appraisal of the candidate and obtains an evaluation of background characteristics through an investigation report.
5. The Police Chief hires the candidate whom he considers most favorable regardless of the rankings of the oral board.
6. The applicant is sworn and his papers processed through the City Manager's Office.
7. The appointee is then required to pass a physical examination.
8. The first duty assignment, usually of three months' duration, is with a sergeant. Thereafter, restricted individual assignments are made until the next available basic course begins at the North Central Texas Regional Police Academy in Arlington, Texas.

9. Upon completion of the basic course and receipt of his certificate, the officer begins regular duty.
10. Appointments to the rank of Sergeant are subject to the same general specifications. During the latest recruitment of a sergeant, during the last quarter of 1971, the Chief prepared and administered a written examination which was designed to measure factual police science and legal information. The restricted background of the then available patrolmen led to the appointment of an officer from another police force. Some promotional guidelines and selection instruments are needed not only to provide incentive and promote morale in the force but to strengthen the validity and credibility of the Chief's judgment in such selections. In the interim the Chief has developed minimum qualifications for the posts of Sergeant and Detective. These set forth various combinations of certification and experience requirements which are intended to facilitate both internal advancement and outside recruitment.

IV. POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION

Article 1269M, Fire and Police Civil Service Acts of the Vernon's Civil Statute, provides for a form of merit personnel administration for municipalities in Texas. Adoption of this alternative requires a local referendum, a political decision-making process outside of the terms of reference of this study. Personnel officials who presently operate under this statute advise against adopting this course of action because of the many rigidities and restraints which the statutory civil service system imposes in a modern employment setting. This report follows this advice and recommends against trying to adopt Article 1269M.

V. RECOMMENDED COURSES OF ACTION

In lieu of adopting a *de jure* merit system which is proving in practice to be unduly restrictive and difficult to administer, it is suggested that the Department adopt the following recommendations. If followed in spirit, these will provide a *de facto* merit system serving both the management needs of the Department and the justifiable desires of its personnel.

A. Recruitment

The Department should undertake positive recruitment measures, particularly among educational institutions and military establishments, in seeking applicants for entry-level or promotional positions.

1. Reason for Recommendation

The established standards of the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education introduce new elements into the recruitment picture: (a) they provide a comparable screening plateau for most Texas police agencies which compete for talent with Forest Hill; (b) conformity with these standards already provides **basic merit qualifications** for acceptable candidates so that local emphasis can be placed on **ranking among candidates and suitability** for service in the Forest Hill setting; and (c) significant emphasis is placed on educational preparation—emphasis which is likely to be seen in an even more strengthened form in the future.

B. Entry Selection Processes

The Department should adopt a policy of requiring all candidates to take two types of written examinations: first, a basic entrance examination such as that provided by the Public Personnel Association; and, second, a personal qualities examination such as the Police Applicant-Training Inventory, developed under a grant from the Criminal Justice Office of the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

Given the results of such examinations, the oral examination board, which should be continued, will have accurate information in areas where it previously had to operate by inference or suggestion—its recommendations to the Chief will be more precise and demonstrably so.

If the Department continues to permit applicants to pay for their own physical (and, if required) psychological examinations, it should stipulate that disabilities appearing during the first year are subject to examination by a physician chosen by the Department. If the result of this examination establishes that the disability existed at the time of the employee's qualifying examination, the employee may be subject to discharge.

The Department, in order to exercise more certain control over the physical condition of applicants, might wish to consider paying for physical examinations and specifying the standards to be met.

C. Probation and Swearing-In

The practice of swearing in recruits as police patrolmen on their first day of employment is hazardous. It is paradoxical to require intensive training if recruits are acting in the same capacity before they receive the training as they are afterwards. All recruits should be appointed in a civilian status and not act as sworn police officers until their formal recruit training is completed.

The probation period can be made flexible enough to accommodate time spent in civilian status so the recruit's career would not be hurt because of the calendars of the Regional Police Academy, or other training sources.

For recruits who have already been acceptably certified, immediate swearing-in could be permitted, and the probation period reduced in really exceptional cases.

D. Training and Development Incentives

One of the most positive trends in police personnel administration is toward better educated and trained police officers. The result of this trend for police departments which do not join it will be, at least, increased personnel turnover, a less qualified force, and recruiting difficulties.

An incentive plan for the educational development of police officers is becoming a "must," and Forest Hill should adopt some type of plan to reward officers who undertake to better themselves.

In such a plan, typically, satisfactory completion of an approved education or training course will bring an officer a stipulated increment (say, three

percent) to their base pay. Attainment of a degree from an accredited college would bring a larger increment.

The establishment of reasonable qualifications for eligibility to such a plan (satisfactory service and performance for two years) would help in retaining personnel and raising the general level of the force at the same time.

The present pay scales for officers would need some expanding to accommodate such a plan, but given the fact that adjustments seem necessary in the near future just to compete for personnel, the incentive plan could be incorporated at that time as a supplementary feature.

One other matter is worth addressing. It is suggested that instead of imposing restrictive residence requirements for police officers, consideration be given to paying an increment over base pay to officers, certified by the Chief, as having established permanent family living quarters within the corporate limits of Forest Hill. A reasonable "residency allowance" might help in recruiting and prove to be a benefit to the Department and to the City.

E. Performance Evaluation

The performance of each officer should be evaluated periodically—twice a year is recommended here—so that deficiencies in training, practice, and conduct can be determined and corrected, or otherwise dealt with. While admitting that no completely satisfactory performance rating has been devised, it must be granted that there are useful rating schemes in existence. The evaluation needs of the Forest Hill Department might be met by the Probst System or by an adaptation of one of the many generalized Employee Evaluation forms in wide use among municipal governments.

The merits of periodic performance evaluation are at least twofold. Subordinates are made formally aware of their superiors' opinions of their work and the superiors are regularly forced to critically review their subordinates' performance.

By using anniversary dates of employment as the base, and reviewing each six months thereafter, the review process is made a continuous one and superior officers are not flooded twice a year with review forms.

F. Promotional Practices

It is important to the successful operation of the Department that only qualified persons be promoted to positions of responsibility. There can be no compromise for any reason. If a young man is promoted to sergeant, it can be assumed that he will remain in that position or a higher one for many years. If a mistake is made in the promotion, the Department must pay for it over a long period. No promotion should be made until the individual to be promoted has passed competitive written and oral qualifying examinations which adequately test potential for the duties and the responsibilities of the advanced position and has had training designed to prepare him for his new position.

Upon the board's ranking of the successful candidates, the Chief should be given final responsibility for the promotion of any one of the top three candidates. All promotions should be probationary for the same period as an original appointment. Under certain circumstances, however (at the discretion of the Chief and for the good of the Department), an extension could be granted if the State Commission approves.

The minimum time required in the service of the Department for a patrolman to become eligible for a sergeancy examination should be no more—and might well be less—than two years at the time a vacancy is to be filled, rather than at the time of either application or examination. Minimal requirements for service in rank should be established; seniority should not be a factor in the promotion process. It can be safely said that long experience within grade is apt to be more repetitive than developmental, and that length of service alone bears very little on the potential of any candidate.

Written promotional examinations are available from the same sources which design and provide entry examinations. When examination grades, evaluation reports, training program grades, and oral interviews are all used—as they should be—a typical weighting of each factor is as follows:

1. Written examination 50 percent
2. Performance based on semiannual reports 15 percent
3. Performance in training programs 15 percent
4. Oral interview 20 percent

The present standards used by the Chief could be considered as basic eligibility requirements or, perhaps, entered into the weightings as an experiential factor under factor "2."

G. Separation

The power to separate an officer from the Department should rest, as it now does, with the Chief and the City Manager. Both the good of the Department and equity require that all dismissals be only for demonstrable cause. This, for practical purposes, means that there exists in the records of the Department sufficient documentation to provide ample evidence of a factual basis for the decision to take any disciplinary action, including dismissal. Needless to say, to assure the existence of such documentation requires systematized records keeping, one of the hallmarks of good management. No dismissal should be made, of course, until the employee has been given ample opportunity to reply to the charges.

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