

Vermont Police K9 Committee Meeting

Friday 6/26/20

Members Present: TC. Robert Ryan, Cpl. David Dewey, Cpl. Rob Sterling, Cpl. Trent Martin, Sgt. Mark Redmond, Sgt. Rich Slusser, LT. Robert Giolito, Chief Ric Cloud, Chris Morrell, Chief Dodge, Mike Carifrio.

In-service/assistant trainers present: Jeremy Perkins (Lebanon PD, NH), Joe Duca (VSP), Bill Boudereau (NH Fish & Game)

Start of Meeting: 09:09 hours @ Vermont Police Academy

Sterling called to order, second by Chief Cloud, all members in favor

Discussion of updates to basic patrol and drug schools: topics were brought up specifically for brand new handlers in training. More classroom was suggested for the trainees to drive home some issues such as standards for the program, expectations, etc...

Requiring the handler to have all necessary equipment for him/herself and the dog for the first day of training, and not showing up for day 1 and then asking “what do I need for the course?” A list of basic equipment could be sent to the new handler or the agency that handler belongs to (similar to new recruits about to attend the basic police academy) stating all basic K9 equipment that will be needed for the patrol and drug class. An issue of “does the cost of the equipment fall on the agency or the individual handler?” The agency that wants to put a handler and K9 through a basic patrol and drug school should equip the handler and K9 accordingly, but if not all necessary equipment is provided, handler still must have basic equipment for 1st day of school. VPCA could possibly reimburse new handler for basic equipment if needed.

Ideas similar to a TA (training assistant) program during the basic K9 schools was talked about. As in having senior handlers come down for a week to assist the class with training and/or specific issues that are needed.

Having a potential “FTO” program for potential/soon to be handlers. Which could possibly look like attending a training without a dog to closely observe more experienced handlers train with their dogs.

K9 Committee should be looking at every dog before it is let into the program. At least a couple or more committee members/experienced trainers should also be evaluating the dog(s) before it is selected.

Vermont police agencies looking to have a patrol/drug dog SHOULD meet all VPA standards, and not be permitted to just go out of state on their own and adopt another state's standards just to "have a K9 program" for their department. An example was brought up, if a VT law enforcement officer carries OC, baton, tazor, gun he/she has to be certified through the VPA. K9 should be the same way. Discussion was then tabled for next meeting so research could be done on how to specifically get all dogs under VPA or how to protect VPCA from out of state "bad bites" if they occurred.

10:04 – BREAK

10:19 – Return to Meeting

Discussion/presentation by Sgt. Slusser (VSP): talked about the New Hampshire State Police tracking/patrol school, as a VSP handler and new hound K9 was sent through their school. There is less obedience at first and all work is positive reinforcement. Whereas we traditionally begin training with a strong emphasis on obedience and continue that throughout the entire program.

Marker training is done for most exercises and has been so for approximately 11 years and is based off of U.S. military dog training.

Most agencies are getting "bloodline" dogs

An emphasis is now being done to bring the drive down in extremely high drive dogs, to help the dog learn better and more efficiently, compared to traditionally trying to bring the drive up, sometimes common with donated dogs that may not have a high drive at first.

"Are we looking for sport or police dogs?" Having the perfect heel or sit looks great, but we want dogs that know what to do and a dog that does good work. The dogs need to think and find on their own.

Free Shaping and working on new techniques, ie. Marker training. Also expanding on civil work and muzzle work to possibly avoid or lessen bite sleeve (equipment) fixation.

Member Updates: Newest member, Mike Carifrio welcomed into Vermont K9 Committee.

Gary Genova no longer with the committee

Chris Morrell advised that this would be his last meeting and was resigning from Committee

An email to be sent throughout program seeking experienced handlers interested in becoming members of the K9 Committee. Jeremy Perkins (Lebanon NHPD) stated he was interested.

Bites: We discussed the new format for bite reports that Dave Dewey has been doing. The way of processing the bite reports now has been getting individual comments/suggestions from committee members and then sending these comments/suggestions back to the handler to use or add in his/her report.

Current bites of discussion were:

- Trp. Ashley Farmer & K9 Ruger (2/3/20)
- Sgt. Tyler Jacobs & K9 Jonah (3/5/20)
- Trp. Justin Thompson & K9 Igor (3/15/20)

Ofc. Sarah Keller & K9 Rush had an unofficial/accidental bite or nip on a co-worker during a crowded roll call or team meeting inside their police department. The bite/nip was deemed accidental as K9 Rush was in an area with a large amount of people and was startled by the co-worker. It was deemed that a full bite report was not needed as this was not an official bite on someone outside the department, BUT, it still needed to be uniformly reviewed by the K9 committee as a possible behavioral issue. Also, at the very least, it should be documented, and what was done or planning to be done to remedy the issue.

Comments on Annual Meeting: The stations of patrol exercises seemed to work well. There were no disagreements about this and no other suggestions made.

In-Service Training: going forward, the idea of having a “monthly skill” to focus on during the trainings. For example, focusing on tracking in April, building searches in June, bite work/recalls in July, etc... This possibly could get all instructors on same page for monthly trainings.

Also working on advanced skills during in-service training that would bring the team(s) to “next level” for post basic patrol school work, i.e. advanced tracking on all surface types, building search tactics for both handler and dog, extensive area searches, etc...

11:34 - Lunch

12:26 - Return to Meeting

Update from TC Ryan: upcoming teams for the 2020 basic patrol school so far is

- Milton PD
- Berlin PD (New Hampshire)

Update from VPCA: vpcg gave \$18,000 for Kevlar Vests

A fundraising raffle took in \$22,000

Other Business: e collars at recerts. In the past, the dog could wear the e collar while recertifying but the transmitter had to be with a committee member. An issue that was mentioned was that there is a possibility that the committee member may not see a known issue occurring and wouldn't use the transmitter when/if needed. Handler can now have use of the transmitter while recertifying, but if so, the e collar should also be worn on duty as well.

It was recommended that for drug training that more vehicle searches should be done to make the training more realistic. We typically hide drugs in rooms or warehouse settings, but then most drug search/sniff deployments are on roadside vehicles.

The possibility of not putting out any Marijuana for drug training was mentioned. This way a handler could actually testify in court that he/she has never had their dog alert, sniff, find marijuana, either on purpose or accidentally.

12:51 – Meeting Adjourned

Sterling motioned to adjourn, Chief Cloud 2nd motion, and unanimous vote “Yes”