

Training Advisory Committee: Meeting Minutes July 29, 2019

Members Present: Chief Jeff Whitesell, Winhall Police; Lt. Steve Coote, VSP; Sgt. Fred Whitcomb, Stowe Police; Sgt. Chad Barrett, Vermont Fish & Wildlife; Sgt. Jennifer Harlow, Newport Police; Senior Deputy Andrew Bent, Washington CSD; Sgt. Jason Covey, Middlebury Police; Officer Adam Murach, Brandon Police; Chief Skyler Genest, VT DLC.

Others Present: VCJTC Director of Training, Cindy Taylor-Patch.

Presentations by VCJTC Director of Administration Drew Bloom, Trooper Paul Sokolowski and VCJTC Training Coordinator Ken Hawkins.

Regrets: Chief George Merkel, Vergennes Police; Lt. Bob Giolito, VT DMV; Commander Greg Sheldon, Rutland Police; Officer Dan Delgado, Burlington Police.

Meeting was called to order at 10:05 by Director Taylor-Patch followed by a call for additions or subtractions to the agenda. An informational discussion of the Academy Fitness test was added.

Nominations for Chair were called for. LT Steve Coote was proposed and unopposed. Director Taylor-Patch called for a vote and LT Coote was elected unanimously. Running of the meeting was then turned over to him. Nominations were called for Vice Chair. Sgt Jason Covey was proposed and unopposed. LT Coote called for a vote and Sgt Covey was elected unanimously. Both recommendations will be forwarded to VCJTC Executive Director Gauthier for final approval.

FITNESS TESTING: On July 25, 2019, in Pittsford, the Texas Department of Public Safety conducted a presentation on their fitness testing model and development. They presented details on job-relatedness, age and gender standards, and how they use a Concept2 Rower for assessment. Further, they detailed concern for law enforcement wellness and national life expectancy rates. Texas has developed a wellness unit and focus heavily on fitness, adequate sleep, nutrition and resiliency. Covey, Genest, Coote,



Barrett and Taylor-Patch all attended the presentation and shared impressions with the group, with specific focus on the Concept2 Rower as a potential fitness test. The Academy is in the process of collecting data on recruit rower performance, along with traditional fitness testing scores (Cooper – bench, sit-ups, push-ups, and 1.5 mile run) for comparison with the intention of using that data to inform the Council regarding future decisions on fitness testing procedures. Informational only – no action taken.

BASIC TRAINING REVIEW: Review of proposed changes to the Level-III (Full-time) Basic Training Program were presented by Director Taylor-Patch. She first called Director Bloom to discuss student and instructor feedback, as well as his perspective as a subject matter expert (SME) regarding additional time needed for Use of Force training. He proposed that a minimum, time for groundfighting techniques should be considered. Committee members asked questions about the program and discussed concerns for departments and staff and community safety. Trooper Sokolowski then discussed his experience training officers at basic and more advanced levels in first aid, practical/tactical medical training (to include tourniquets), and how that skillset relates to patrol procedures training. Director Taylor-Patch discussed her wish to move this training from post-basic into an early stage of Basic Training so as to utilize it within the patrol procedures curriculum in an effort to instill a much higher level of comfort and proficiency with those skills. Trooper Sokolowski and LT Coote, both Patrol Procedures instructors, voiced their support of this change to the curriculum. Next, TC Ken Hawkins spoke to the Committee about Police Driver training. As driving is such a high liability area in general, but especially in a group of primarily young drivers, some who have not been driving long, magnified by the amount of driving required by the job, and in some cases, in dangerous situations, members expressed interest in expanding this section of the curriculum.

Additional topics discussed included an introduction to the criminal justice system; civil rights and fair & impartial policing; dealing with groups, peaceful protests, crowds, etc.; water safety; bomb threats; stalking; strangulation investigation; domestic violence; eyewitness identification; active shooter response; criminal law; and more. These discussions were for information gathering only. No action taken.

Director Taylor-Patch will summarize topics and timeframes discussed, as well as coordinate presentations and information to be discussed at the next meeting to be held on August 21, 2019 at 1000 hours at the Police Academy.

At 1357 hours, Chief Genest moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Sgt Whitcomb. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindy Taylor-Patch
Director of Training