

The Chief Takes Action

Chief Smith is confronted with several issues. He has been in the position for approximately two years and a new city manager has been hired by the city. Chief Smith was hired from outside of the department two years ago and has 19 years of experience in a neighboring community that was slightly larger than Ashcroft. Several issues seem to be converging at the same time and Chief Smith is seeking a way to deal with the issues.

Background:

The City of Ashcroft has approximately 52,000 people. The community is a mixture of white and blue collar workers with the primary industries being a steel plant and some light industry. The community is supportive of unions. Ashcroft has a mixture of citizens and is 85% white, 13% Afro-American, and 2% other. The income level is middle income and the education is predominantly high school. All of the elected officials in the community are white, except for the Chief Judge for the District who is Afro-American. The crime rates in the community are average for communities of the size and the police department has 1.8 officers per 1,000 citizens.

Issues:

- 1) The police benefit association (which represents the officers and sergeants in the department) has not reached a wage settlement with the city and have mentioned that if they do not get their way they will start a "work slow down."
- 1) The arrest rate for Afro-Americans in the city is 18% and a group of citizen activists have approached the mayor about the department acting in a racist way toward Afro-Americans. The percentage of Afro-Americans on the department is 7%.
- 1) The city is having funding issues and the chief has been asked to find ways to cut 5% from the budget of the department.
- 1) The new city manager believes that one method of decreasing crime in the community is through foot and bike patrol. The police officers have told the chief that they will resist the implementation of these methods of patrol due to the dangerousness of the assignment. The city manager also asked about several issues when he met with the chief:

The percentage of minorities and women on the department. (3% of the offices on the department are females).

The number of fatal accidents in the city. The chief knows that the rate is about average for communities of Ashcroft's size.

The level of traffic enforcement. This is low as mentioned elsewhere and there will be resistance from officers and citizens if the enforcement of traffic laws is increased.

The number of outstanding warrants for offenses. This is high, due to jail crowding the departments in the area have not worked the outstanding arrest warrants heavily.

The chief's future plans. Chief Smith would like to stay for another four years in order that he can get his retirement.

The jail is overcrowded and the sheriff for the county has announced that when the jail reaches capacity he will not accept any additional prisoners from the city.

The department has a history of limited traffic enforcement and the city has an exceptionally high traffic crash rate.

A delegation of individuals from the local safehouse approached the chief last month to ask that the chief change the department's policy on domestic cases to one of arrest rather than mediation. The chief knows that the district attorney does not believe in prosecuting domestic violence cases.

Assignment:

Chief Smith believes that he must make some changes in the department. He has asked that you, as a member of the department provide him with some thoughts on what should be done to make needed changes. Your analysis should include responses to the following:

- 1) Thoughts about priorities for what the department should start working on first.
- 1) A list of those who have a stake in the listed problems. In short, who will care if changes are made or solutions proposed. Who are the "stakeholders?"
- 1) What information is needed to more fully analyze the issues?
- 1) Other thoughts?

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