

The Maine Chiefs of Police Association
Review of the

Damariscotta Police Department



December 2025

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and the
Maine Chiefs of Police Association
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Damariscotta Town Employees

Interim Chief of Police Phil Tessier

Staff and Officers of the Damariscotta Police Department

and

**Community members of the Town of Damariscotta and partnering law enforcement and
communications professionals**

INTRODUCTION

In the Summer of 2025, the *Maine Chiefs of Police Association* received a request for an evaluation of the Damariscotta Police Department. The Damariscotta Town Manager requested a comprehensive study of the Damariscotta Police Department as well as a report containing recommendations based on the review's findings. In response to this request, the Board of Directors of the *Maine Chiefs of Police Association* agreed to undertake such a study. Recognizing the need for objectivity in the assessment of the operation of the Damariscotta Police Department, the Association selected a Review Panel comprised of three police chiefs who were not acquainted with the operations of the department or the history of the town and its residents. Members of the Panel were:

Chief Andrew Booth, Panel Chair
Bath Police Department

- 24 years Law Enforcement experience, 3 years as Deputy Chief, 4 years as Chief of Police
- Bachelor's Degree in History, Minor in Business, St. Michael's College, VT
- Lieutenant Colonel (Retired), Infantry, US Army/VT Army National Guard
- Committee member/Assessor, MCOPA Maine Law Enforcement Accreditation Program
- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Member

Chief Kevin Lully
Augusta Police Department

- 30 years' Law Enforcement experience, 6 years as Deputy Chief, 2 years as Chief of Police
- Bachelor of Arts Degree in Behavioral Science, and Associate Degree in Criminal Justice, University of Maine
- Graduate of the FBI National Academy, Session 267
- 2nd Vice President, Maine Chiefs of Police Association Executive Board
- Board/Committee Member: Maine Chiefs of Police Association Memorial Committee and Highway Safety Committee, United Way Impact2032 Financial Stability Cabinet, CIT Regional Training Council Chair, Alford Center for Health Workplace Safety, Augusta Downtown Alliance
- Member: Maine Chiefs of Police Association, International Association of Chiefs of Police, FBI National Academy Associates

Chief Daniel Gallant
Yarmouth Police Department

- 30 years Law Enforcement experience, 6 years as Chief of Police
- Bachelor's Degree in Criminology, University of Southern Maine
- Maine Chiefs of Police Association, District II representative
- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Member

As requested, the Review Panel initiated a study of operational and management practices within the Damariscotta Police Department in the Fall of 2025. The review was conducted in three general phases. They were:

Phase 1: Review of Materials

In conjunction with the on-site evaluation, the Panel members individually and collectively reviewed pertinent materials supplied by the Town of Damariscotta and the Damariscotta Police Department. These materials included, but were not limited to:

- Town of Damariscotta Annual Reports 2021-2024
- Damariscotta Police Department Budgets
- Damariscotta Police Policies and Procedures
- Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the Police Union and the Town
- Calls for Service Data and Crime Statistics
- Damariscotta Comprehensive Plan, June 2024

Phase 2: On-Site Evaluation

From September 12, 2025, through mid-November 2025, the Review Panel conducted several on-site evaluations. The on-site evaluations included personal observations of the Damariscotta Police Department by Panel members, as well as interviews that were conducted with individuals from both in and outside of town government who possessed relevant information regarding the activities of Damariscotta PD. In addition to individual interviews, the panel conducted a community meeting on November 13th for public input.

Those interviewed included, but were not limited to:

- Town Manager Andrew Dorr
- Interim Chief of Police Phil Tessier
- Damariscotta Police Staff (current and former)
- Citizens within the community
- Area businesses
- Damariscotta town employees
- School Officials
- Neighboring Police Chiefs and Lincoln County Sheriff
- Lincoln County Dispatch Center
- District Attorney Natasha Irving, District VI

Additionally, the on-site evaluation included the inspection, analysis, and review of:

- Department Equipment
- Police Budget
- Facilities

- Training Records
- Records and Data Management Systems
- Lincoln County Communications Center
- Department Policies
- Collective Bargaining Agreement

Phase 3: Analysis and Report

Besides the on-site evaluations, the Review Panel met on multiple occasions to analyze gathered information and materials to generate this report. The following is the work product of the Damariscotta Police Department Review Panel. The focus areas of this report are arranged so that the reader is provided with a general explanation and/or philosophy regarding the focus area, findings, and any recommendations for modification or improvement made by the Review Panel.

REPORT OBJECTIVES

The intent of this report is not to criticize the present police department, its practices, or those responsible for them. Rather, the Review Panel’s goal is to present, in an objective fashion, a comprehensive set of recommendations which, if adopted, should result in improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of the Damariscotta Police Department.

This report should not be considered as an indictment of the past, but rather as a blueprint for the future. This report is not to be construed as a “report card” of the Damariscotta Police Department, since it does not fully explore the many positive activities which are undoubtedly and presently undertaken by the department.

Finally, the Review Panel sincerely hopes that its efforts serve as a catalyst for positive change within the Damariscotta Police Department and urges all those interested – town officials, department members, and concerned citizens – to seize this opportunity to bolster the professional status and effectiveness of the Damariscotta Police Department.

REVIEW PANEL MISSION STATEMENT

To provide, through application of law enforcement best practices and through diligent effort, care, and research, a navigable pathway to an elevated delivery of police services. To recognize the noble efforts of the members of the Damariscotta Police Department and, through this work, to enhance their safety and wellness.

One never hears that a police department is doing **too good** a job, or that the officers and administrators are **too dedicated** or **too well-trained**. Frequently, what we hear are complaints of real or perceived shortcomings, frequently by those with little or no basis of knowledge to level that criticism. However, as self-critical professionals constantly striving for the betterment

of ourselves and those in our charge; we acknowledge that no department is perfect and that as humans, we are fallible. Consequently, to better ensure a reasonable and realistic perspective, the Review Panel has striven to identify positive areas in this department as well as those that would benefit the organization and the town from change and improvement.

It is becoming an accepted event for the leaders of a community to request that an outside group of experienced and qualified professionals conduct an audit of the management and practices within their police department. These requests are often preceded by some organizational change, such as a new Town Manager or Police Chief. Occasionally, these requests are preceded by an extended period of conflict within the agency. In Damariscotta's case, they are transitioning police chiefs.

Faulty perceptions, rumors, unreasonable expectations, and poor communication can easily become destructive components in the organizational equation that must be identified and excised to allow accurate findings and to make good and viable recommendations.

Law enforcement officers are selected for many personal attributes, including assertiveness, the ability to make quick decisions, and take decisive action. These same attributes can create challenges in convincing every employee to form up and march in the same direction. Police administrators stand on a slippery rock in the middle of a stream with far too many people willing to give them a nudge in the wrong direction. In no other municipal profession is one expected to govern individuals who possess the power, authority, and autonomy of police officers. To do so willingly, with a caring and compassionate attitude, and where every move and decision is a matter of public record, is not a task for the faint of heart. It demands unwavering integrity, emotional intelligence, and a steadfast commitment to justice – all while navigating immense public scrutiny and institutional resistance.

Society rightfully demands the best from its police. Overwhelmingly, police officers serve with the selfless desire to protect their community from humanity's worst. We hope this report helps them to achieve that admirable goal.

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Town of Damariscotta has history going back 2,500 years, first inhabited by native American Wawenok Abenaki tribes. It currently is a community of approximately 2,297 residents (2020 Census). The total town area is approximately 14.71 square miles, of which 12.42 square miles is land and 2.29 square miles is water. Damariscotta is a coastal community in Lincoln County and located along the Damariscotta River, a tidal river that empties into the Atlantic Ocean. Damariscotta has a history of shipbuilding, brickyards, lumber mills, oyster farming and fisheries. The name derives from the native American word "Madamescontee," meaning "place of an abundance of alewives." The land became part of the Pemaquid Patent, granted by the Plymouth Council in 1631. It was incorporated as a separate town on March 15, 1848. Neighboring Damariscotta is Newcastle, a town that shares similar concerns and collaborates

closely with Damariscotta on many community issues. These two towns are often referred to as the Twin Villages, as referenced by a welcome sign as you enter the area from Route 1.

Damariscotta has a Town Meeting – Select Board – Town Manager form of government, with the annual Town Meeting taking place in June for residents to vote on expenditures. The Police Chief reports to the Town Manager. The Select Board consists of 5 members.

According to the latest Census ([Damariscotta town, Lincoln County, Maine - Census Bureau Profile](#)), Damariscotta’s population is similar to, if not slightly less diverse, than the State of Maine, and is broken down as follows:

Race	Percentage
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2
Asian	.24
Black or African American	0.2
Hispanic or Latino	.49
Two or More Races	.39
White	98.92

The population density of Damariscotta is 164.4 people per square mile, which is much denser than Maine’s average of 44.2.

The median household income for Damariscotta (in 2020 dollars) is \$59,659, lower than Lincoln County’s household income of \$72,026. 17% of the population falls under the poverty rate. There are 1,339 total housing units in the town. The employment rate is 50.7% and the education (Bachelor’s or higher) rate is 40.3%. The median age is 41.9 years, lower than the Lincoln County average of 51.1 years. English is the predominant language spoken (97%) with Spanish being the next prevalent at 2%. The average employment commute time is 24 minutes, which is approximately the same as the county average. The home ownership rate is 67%, lower than the 83.8% rate for the county.

The Town was part of School District AOS 93 but as of July 1, 2025, is part of a regional school district with Bremen and Newcastle, RSU#48. K-8 students attend Great Salt Bay Community school and secondary school primarily consists of Lincoln Academy and Bath Regional Career and Technical Center.

Easily accessible by way of scenic US Rt. 1, Damariscotta is well known for its “village” area which hosts various gift shops, cafes, and antique stores as well as the annual multi-day Pumpkinfest and Regatta.

The Town continues to retain its historic charm and is a popular tourist location on the mid-coast. The Town’s commercial district hosts a significant number of small businesses including Reny’s flagship store and several unique shops, boutiques, galleries, and studios.

Damariscotta includes an active YMCA and MaineHealth Lincoln Hospital - Miles Campus, which offers emergency care and other hospital services, both of which contribute to the overall health of the community. Damariscotta is a service center for neighboring town residents.

POLICE DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Damariscotta Police Department (DPD) has an authorized complement of five (5) full-time officers, three part-time reserve patrol officer positions, and one administrative office assistant. The organizational makeup is as follows:

- (1) Chief
- (1) Sergeant
- (3) Patrol Officers
- (3) Part-time "Reserve" Patrol Officers
- (1) Administrative position

DPD provides 20-hour police protection for the community, with assistance from the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office. DPD officers are on duty, normally, between 6am to 2am the following morning. Between 2am and 6am, the chief or sergeant have, in past practice, been responsible for answering their phone to determine if incidents should be relayed to Lincoln County SO, if a DPD officer needs to be called in, or if it can wait for DPD officers to sign on duty at 6am. In other cases, Lincoln County dispatch will assign the call to a deputy.

The previous chief reportedly worked a 40 hours per week schedule, daytime, Monday through Thursday, similar to other town employees.

The sergeant position, 40 hours per week, mainly covers the afternoon shift, from 4pm to 2am, Tuesday through Friday.

Between the chief and sergeant, this allows for a police department supervisor to be on duty most weekdays, sometimes with a patrol officer. There are times when patrol officers work alone with limited supervision, such as weekends, holidays, or when a supervisor is otherwise unavailable (vacation/sick, etc.).

Full-time patrol officers work 40 hours/week, with a Monday through Thursday dayshift, Friday through Sunday days, and nights on Mondays. Reserve officers are assigned as needed to fill open shifts or supplement full-time staff.

Dispatching is handled 24/7 by the Lincoln County Communications Center. This system appears to work adequately for the department and community.

DPD does not have specialized police units like crime scene technicians, K9 officer, or SWAT/tactical team. In an emergency or call for service that requires this type of specialized training and tactics, DPD contacts Lincoln County SO or Maine State Police for assistance.

DPD currently has officers conduct some of their own investigations but requests assistance from the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigations Division (CID) for larger criminal investigations requiring specialized training, resources, or experience.

DPD appears to enjoy the strong support of the community. Visits with local residents found no complaints. Officers appear generally satisfied with their schedules, equipment, and facility. At the public meeting held on November 13th, the vast majority of comments were in praise of the police department and their efforts. Details will be discussed further.

DEPARTMENT MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Department Mission: A mission statement is a formal summary of the aims and values of an organization. Its effectiveness is determined by how well it is constructed, communicated to - and internalized by - members of the organization, and whether it is used to inform agency goals and objectives. A mission statement should clearly communicate what the agency does. Many mission statements succumb to an overuse of words. A good mission statement should be clear, concise, and useful.

Department Goals: Goals are broad, over-arching destinations that an organization intends to reach. A generic example of a police department goal (not necessarily relevant for DPD) might be "a 25% reduction in shoplifting".

Department Objectives: Objectives are the specific steps an organization intends to take in order to achieve established goals. In order to achieve the desired goal of a reduction in shoplifting, a department might establish an objective to "impart theft detection training to 10 retail stores", or "initiate a social media campaign to discourage shoplifting", or "target shoplifting through a combination of uniformed and plainclothes patrols through retail stores for two hours per day, five days per week".

Department missions, goals, and objectives should all complement each other, and must never be in conflict. In turn, the Department's overall mission, goals, and objectives should nest the Town's overall mission, goals, and objectives.

Department Mission / Goals / Objectives - Findings:

The Damariscotta Police Department mission and values statement reads:

Our Mission

Provide quality progressive police services to our community by working in partnership with the community, promoting a safe environment while raising the quality of life for all through police and citizen interaction, and focusing on respect, integrity, fairness, and professionalism.

Our Values

Integrity

The foundation of our agency is defined by its employee's honesty, moral standards, compassion, ethical conduct, and sincerity.

Respect

We must display and demonstrate consideration toward all, thus fostering a lasting respect from those we serve. "Treat others as you would like to be treated".

Teamwork

By supporting one another in common goals and working together for efficient resolution, we will better serve the community.

Partnership

Understanding that the police alone cannot solve community problems and crime, we encourage a trusting relationship between the police and citizens. We encourage and support the assistance and contributions of all community members

Department Mission / Goals / Objectives - Recommendations:

This mission statement and values are consistent with other modern police departments in the state and nation, reflecting community-oriented values to best serve their communities.

When asked about Department goals, the interim chief and Town manager discussed the immediate goal of maintaining acceptable levels of policing while the department transitions police chiefs, stating the desire to allow the incoming chief to help formulate near and long-term goals moving forward under their administration. They were not aware of any specific goals for DPD other than the recent goal to seek and obtain Maine Law Enforcement Accreditation Program (MLEAP) accreditation, which DPD successfully obtained in late 2023. Other staff interviewed did not have knowledge of current specific goals or objectives.

The panel recommends that, upon selection of a new chief, DPD formulates some near-term and long-term goals to focus efforts and prioritize tasks, both internal to the police department, and external in support of Town-wide goals or objectives (e.g. as listed in the comprehensive plan or other planning document).

Some examples of internal goals could be achieving MLEAP re-accreditation late next year, development of a new special program within the department, or a focus on professional development for junior officers.

An example of an external goal, in conjunction with the Town's comprehensive plan, could be improving traffic safety, with law enforcement holding the enforcement end of that task, along with Town and MDOT support for traffic calming/traffic engineering changes at high crash locations. Another goal may be to address substance use or mental health issues alongside area non-profit organizations.

These are just examples; the panel recommends a deliberate effort on a regular basis to set goals, draft plans, allocate resources, and measure success. Many small police departments do not engage in structured goals and objectives setting. However, if possible, the department should work to establish annual goals and objectives that are sanctioned by the municipal government, as there may be a fiscal component, and communicated clearly and regularly to all members of the agency.

Goals and objectives should be reviewed regularly to determine whether they are still relevant, and how well the department is meeting them. This scheduled review should become routine and help establish checkmarks to determine how well the department is succeeding, or not succeeding, in established goals, as well as determine if those goals and objectives are still valid, as things change over time.

By providing goals and objectives, it offers officers guidance on where to focus their individual daily activities to meet Department goals. Officers should believe in their mission and role they play, as this positively affects morale, professionalism, and reflects pride in their Department.

If mission, goal, and objective establishment cannot be accomplished internally, there are professional facilitators readily available to assist with the process.

ADMINISTRATION

The administration of any police agency should not be undertaken by anyone who is not willing to sacrifice a significant amount of time and effort. Police chiefs are entrusted with millions of taxpayer dollars in the form of personnel, budgets, facilities, and equipment. In turn, they are expected to spend those dollars wisely.

To be effective, a chief must become a proficient personnel and resource manager, financial planner, labor negotiator, mentor and visionary. He or she must be engaged not only in the department and community, but also with professional peers and organizations. The chief must stay informed about developments in law, professional best practices, and industry norms to maintain credibility with staff and the public - most importantly, to ensure officer safety and minimize the inherent risks in policing.

As with any organization, the administration is the key to organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The police chief must be a leader and must set an example for the members of the department to follow.

In the Damariscotta Police Department, the administration consists of the police chief and one sergeant. Direct supervision of line staff is performed by the chief or sergeant. DPD's chain of command is correctly listed in their policy and organizational chart. All employees interviewed understand their chain of command and responsibilities.

Budget and Cost of Police Services

The budget should be based on a plan, accepted by the local unit of government, to determine the department's course of action during the fiscal year. The budget becomes a document that guides the agency's operations. During the budgeting process certain principles should be observed:

1. The focus should be on both present and future problems.
2. Budgeting should be considered as one aspect of many when planning the department's direction.
3. Budgets should be created to meet the goals and objectives of the agency. Specific, attainable, and measurable objectives need to be set if overall goals are to be met.

Even in times of static or decreasing funding, department goals and objectives must be reviewed and revised within the framework of the budget process. Failure to do so results in stagnation.

Police work is a 24-hour, 365-day business. As a result, overtime costs can greatly exceed predictions due to unforeseen absences and circumstances. The United States Fair Labor Standards Act and the Garcia decision combine to require the payment of overtime for required training and extended workdays, usually after 40 hours in a week.

Every community makes decisions about the appropriate level of funding for their law enforcement services. While this Review Panel will make suggestions that we believe to be appropriate and fiscally responsible, only the leaders of the Town of Damariscotta, armed with knowledge of the needs of the entire town and their input, can decide whether they will accept or are willing to finance these suggestions.

Budget and Cost of Police Services - Findings:

According to the Town's budget report, the police department for FY26 makes up 23.2% of the total town budget. The police department makes up about half of the total full-time town employees, at 5 sworn officers and 1 non-sworn staff member. Budgetary expenses include their facility, equipment, and personnel.

In most public safety agency budgets, personnel expenses account for the greatest portion of the budget. Damariscotta PD's current Fiscal Year budget appears to bear this out, with approximately 85% of the budget in salary and benefits and 15% in department operations.

The Damariscotta Town Manager is responsible for the official preparation of the budget with initial input from the police chief. During budget preparation, the police chief has conversations with staff about any needs assessments and recommendations, evaluates former budgets, and tried to predict future needs, presenting a draft police department budget to the Town Manager. The Town Manager gathers the respective town department's budget requests and submits the final budget for review by the town officials. The police budget has been

scrutinized in the past, resulting in cost savings measures being implemented which directly affected the final police budget.

The Damariscotta Police Department is MLEAP accredited which does hold them to a higher standard for maintenance of their equipment and facilities. Although this does result in a financial commitment from the town, at the same time, because of the accreditation, the town is also eligible for up to 25% credit on the police department’s liability insurance contribution through Maine Municipal Association (MMA).

After reviewing the current budget, the Panel finds no issues and notes that the allocations and expenditures appear consistent with professional standards.

Per capita cost for police protection was figured using a population of 2297 in 2024 (Source: US Census). Damariscotta’s cost for police services during the current budget year with an approved budget of \$907,000 equals \$394.86 per capita. Comparative analysis with other town police departments is difficult, due to a lack of consistency in budgeting processes. For example, some towns budget for all employee benefit costs in an HR or similar budget instead of tracking those expenses in the PD budget. Some budgets include building maintenance, part-time staff, or Parking or Animal Control in Police Budgets, while others either do not fund such positions or place them under other Municipal Budgets. **Keeping in mind that the comparison may be flawed due to these variables, we offer the following:**

TOWN	POPULATION (2020 US CENSUS DATA)	POLICE BUDGET	POLICE COSTS PER RESIDENT
Damariscotta	2,297	\$907,000	\$ 394.86
Thomaston	2,767	\$ 1,056,369	\$ 381.77
Waldoboro	5,154	\$ 1,391,897	\$ 270.06
Rockport	3,644	\$ 1,400,000	\$ 384.19
Camden	5,232	\$ 1,803,000	\$ 344.61
Wiscasset	3,742	\$ 937,000	\$ 250.66

Budget and Cost of Police Services – Recommendations:

The Review Panel recognizes that the Damariscotta Police Department has an appropriate budget in the interest of the taxpayer. Being a small town, it can be difficult to allocate appropriate fiscal resources to meet a community’s needs, with governing bodies having to prioritize programs in the best interest of their communities. Damariscotta has a police cost per resident on the higher end of the sample towns, but, unlike most of the sample departments, is an MLEAP-accredited agency with support from the town and residents, having earned a good reputation for community-oriented policing. With this, the panel recommends further focus on maintaining an appropriate police budget reflecting the needs of a modern, accredited agency, challenged with competing for scarce resources in the form of employees with other police departments who may have more to offer. People searching for law enforcement careers often

look at wages, work schedule, health and retirement benefits, equipment, and specialized training/positions, when deciding where to work. Smaller departments have unique challenges attracting and maintaining quality employees.

During the preparation of the budget, the police chief should encourage the input of all employees to help in the determination of department needs and goals, such as in an annual all-staff meeting or periodic command and staff meetings. The panel recommends this occur moving forward, as will be discussed elsewhere in this report, as it will help not only with budget preparation, but overall department cohesion. During these meetings, a review of the year-to-date budget should be conducted, with shortages noted and a plan devised to operate the department within budget. When armed with this budgetary information, the entire team is better able to understand and have actual buy-in with decisions related to mid-fiscal year modifications and why they are sometimes necessary due to changes in staffing, equipment, gasoline consumption, training, etc.

Community Relations

No law enforcement agency can be effective without community support. This can be particularly true in a community like Damariscotta; the police department is perhaps the most visible embodiment of town government and the only one that is consistently present in the community.

Citizens have a greater impact on decisions than ever before and demand a voice regarding the provision of police services. Developing a positive relationship with the community is the responsibility of every professional law enforcement officer. Favorable relationships and working collaboratively with the members of a community can cultivate the support necessary to succeed.

Enlightened law enforcement administrators accept, as a basic tenet of their profession, the statement that “the police should be a part of the community, not apart from it.” While many police agencies profess to be community oriented, a large number are program driven and do not philosophically embrace a true partnership between the police and the community they serve.

What is a community? When defined as a group of people living in the same place (the residents of Damariscotta) or having a particular characteristic in common (other department heads, neighboring police departments, non-profits, etc.), it quickly becomes obvious that much of what police departments do, police administrators specifically, must be considered community relations.

The Review Panel realizes that it is difficult to assess a department’s relationship with its community, based upon the limited amount of time allotted for this evaluation. We do believe, however, that underlying trends can be identified while keeping in mind that the most vocal respondents do not necessarily represent the majority view.

Community Relations - Findings:

Neighboring law enforcement agencies report each having either formal or informal mutual aid agreements with the Damariscotta Police Department. Each Chief of Police reported having great respect for the former chief, and all recognized him for functioning in several key roles in the police department. There was a shared sentiment that the Town of Damariscotta will have a difficult time finding a replacement who will be willing to work the hours and attend the community events as done by the former chief, Chief Jason Warlick.

One of the largest community events of the year is the annual Damariscotta Pumpkinfest. An event which began almost 20 years ago in 2007 now draws thousands of people to their town. DPD is very active in the community during this event and are directly involved with event planning and public safety. This event allows those travelling from near and far to engage with DPD and its staff and enjoy all that the community has to offer.

Social media has become a mainstay in community relations and has changed both the way people communicate and their expectations about how to receive vital information. The Panel surveyed the DPD's social media presence on Facebook and found that it is active and has a large following (3k followers). During the transition of the chief and administrative assistant, social media postings appear to have occurred less frequently, however, posts have now increased as new staff have arrived. The posts are relative, timely, and professional. The department does not have any other social media accounts that the panel is aware of.

The Town and Police Department websites appear functional, relevant, and current, offering information to the public in an easy-to-navigate manner.

DPD is active with raising money to support Maine Special Olympics, participating in "Law Enforcement Torch Run". It has also participated in the Town's annual "Trunk or Treat". The largest event of the year, Pumpkinfest, sees a heavy presence by DPD and its officers, giving them the opportunity to be more visible to their community and its many visitors during this time. These events add to the strong community relations and partnership that DPD has with the people of Damariscotta.

Community Relations - Recommendations:

The panel recommends maintaining the strong relationship DPD has with its community by continuing to focus on their department mission and values, community outreach, and involvement with community organizations and events.

Some of the many comments we received during our interviews with community members and business owners is that they appreciate the presence of DPD in the community, their quick response to a wide-variety of needs, their professional demeanor, that the former chief did a lot

to engage with the community, and that they would like to see the next chief continue to do build on the precedence set by the former chief in terms of community engagement.

Comments at the public meeting praised the interim chief for his professional but personable communications with demonstrators at Pumpkinfest, maintaining public safety while allowing demonstrators to peacefully protest, and effectively arresting one protestor for breaking the law. Most comments were favorable about DPD in the community and respondents did not want to see that engagement decrease in either quality or quantity.

Some areas that the public would like to continue to see, or improve, is a focus on downtown traffic and pedestrian safety with specific mentions about speeding cars and dangerous crosswalks. These issues are amongst the most common concerns by residents in many communities and a main role for law enforcement in every community.

DPD should continue to seek any additional opportunities to engage with citizens to maintain the public trust they have worked hard to achieve. Public events of nearly every type represent avenues for the police department to increase contact with citizens. The utilization of social media allows the agency to share the good they are doing in their community with a broader audience and also allows them to craft the narrative from a personalized purview, which may entice people to have a feeling of connection with the police. DPD may want to consider broadening their online reach through the use of other social media accounts, the town's website, or other communication technology to provide the best possible community engagement.

Crime Analysis

Every citizen wants to feel safe within their community and rising crime rates are always cause for alarm. The Review Panel was charged with comparing the Damariscotta Police Department's crime rates, crime clearance rates, patterns, and trends with other departments of similar makeup. In most cases, it is relatively easy to find departments of similar size, population, and demographics for comparative purposes. The Panel compared the statistics which are compiled through Police agencies reporting to the Maine Department of Public Safety's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)/National Incident Based Reporting (NIBRS) Division.

Crimes are categorized by severity and tracked accordingly, leading to crime statistics for a given jurisdiction. These statistics measure trends and distribution of crime in the United States and, more significantly, within geographic regions of contributing states such as Maine. These crimes are counted by law enforcement agencies as they become known and are reported on a monthly basis. These UCR-defined "index offenses" as listed below were selected as a measuring device because as a group, they represent the most common crime problems. They are all serious crimes either by their very nature or due to the volume and frequency with which they occur. The Panel feels that using the reported crime data is a useful tool for this report.

Note: These are only eight crimes, out of several hundred, that a police department may investigate and are in no way inclusive of the services a police department provides.

Crime Analysis - Findings:

A review of the statistical data indicates that the Damariscotta Police Department is a moderately active community regarding demand for police services. There are a relatively low number of “crimes against persons,” which is what a community would like to see, compared to “crimes against property” like thefts, which are a nuisance but much more common. Even with the low number of “crimes against persons” like assault, rape, or homicide, in Damariscotta, they do occur and would require immediate police response and thorough investigation.

Crime Statistics for Damariscotta Police Department: Maine Department of Public Safety

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population*	2134	2151	2144	2153	2332	2304	2307
Crime Rate	20.62	21.85	19.59	32.05	15.44	16.92	22.10
Murder / manslaughter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rape	0	1	3	0	0	0	2
Robbery	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Aggravated Assault	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Burglary	1	1	5	1	3	0	0
Larceny / Theft	41	44	34	20	12	17	27
Motor Vehicle Theft	2	1	1	0	0	3	2
Arson	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Index Crimes	44	47	81	69	36	39	51
Clearance Rate	72.7	61.7	49.38	52.17	55.56	53.85	64.71
Sworn Officers	4	4	5	5	5	5	5
Officers Per 1000	2.3	2.8	2.8	2.3	2.1	2.1	2.1

*Population data as reported in Maine Department of Public Safety “Crime in Maine”

A vast majority of any police department’s time involves responding to Calls for Service that may not rise to the level of one of the crimes listed above. These Calls for Service relate to quality-of-life complaints such as disturbances or traffic complaints. A more detailed analysis is covered in this document under “Workload.”

For the purposes of this review, we looked at the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) and National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data submitted by the police department for the calendar years 2018-2024. This information was gathered from [Crime in Maine | Maine State Police](#). Statistics show that the crime rates fluctuated from 2021 to 2023 with the most nominal increase in 2021. 2023 is the most recent year for which crime data has been published, however we were able to obtain the reported data for 2024 from the town of Damariscotta.

A table offering comparative analysis of crime rates, clearance rates, and staffing of Damariscotta and similar municipalities is provided later in this report under Staffing and Deployment.

Note: Effective in 2021, there was a federal mandate that all law enforcement agencies must start reporting crime data to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The Damariscotta Police Department currently reports to NIBRS. As such, they are early adopters of this reporting system in Maine. However, because of this, historical data that utilize these different reporting styles should not be compared equally alike to one another as there are different reporting requirements and changes to definitions of what crimes are reported.

Crime Analysis - Recommendations:

Given the size of Damariscotta Police Department, the crime analysis data should be examined by the chief and all sworn staff. By looking at crime data, staff can consider areas to place emphasis on or employ various crime diversion programs. Keeping current on the latest crime trends lends itself to efficient and effective law enforcement and crime prevention. Small town police departments typically have a good sense of what local issues are causing the most amount of crimes and can draft possible solutions based on these observed problems. Solving crimes is the goal, but this is not always possible, so clearance rates will vary and are not expected to be 100%, for many different reasons. A high clearance rate, above the State average, is a good indicator of a successful police department. Damariscotta typically has a clearance rate of over 50%, which is respectable. While there are many factors involved in a successful clearance rate, a careful and continual analysis of crimes committed can provide useful information and have a positive impact.

Record Keeping and Information Technology

The ability to compile, retrieve, analyze, and manipulate information is invaluable to a police department. Information storage and retrieval is paramount to a department being able to set short and long-term goals, assess its effectiveness, and provide a professional level of service.

There is a direct relationship between a department's efficiency and the quality of its records and record keeping procedures. Every police administrator is called upon to make decisions relating to the distribution of his/her workforce, the expenditure of funds, and the revision of plans of operations in response to changing crime conditions. Much of the information necessary to arrive at sound decisions may be found in administrative records or reports that give a picture of present conditions and problems faced by the department.

There are laws regarding record retention, as set forth by the State, and subject to Freedom of Access Act requests. These are not only State laws, but also standards for an accredited agency. As such, proper record keeping and management is vital to a professional police department.

In addition to paper records, police departments everywhere currently rely heavily on information technology (the use of computers and telecommunications systems for storing, retrieving, and sending information) to perform their jobs. The hardware, software, and policies and procedures related to their use are crucial to ensure the security of sensitive information where it is entered, stored, and transmitted beyond the department's walls. Malicious penetration of these systems for the theft of information or to hold the municipality's information for ransom can cripple operations, result in huge monetary loss to the town, professionally embarrass the organization, and expose those whose records are compromised to identity theft.

Record Keeping and Information Technology - Findings:

DPD is an MLEAP accredited agency, having passed rigorous standards based upon best practices. Some of these standards focus on Record Keeping and Information Technology.

Various Information Technology platforms in the law enforcement profession contain confidential information. These systems are considered Criminal Justice Information Systems (CJIS) which require an additional set of standards be followed to ensure the integrity of the system and prevent unauthorized access or use. CJIS security standards are set forth by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and are managed by both Maine State Police's Access Integrity Unit (AIU) as well as each respective local agency with access to these systems or information. These requirements include how the connections are secured and who accesses the information/systems, and that those authorized are regularly trained and certified in proper use and compliance with CJIS standards.

Panel review of current CJIS security compliance showed several discrepancies, with, at the time of the panel's investigation, none of the current sworn officers had recent training or certification. Only the administrative assistant showed current CJIS security clearance, active from her former employer. This issue was immediately addressed by the panel with the interim chief and Lincoln County Communications and is being corrected as of this writing.

The panel reviewed the last accreditation report and observed DPD's current record keeping system and information technology. These were generally found to be in order. Storage for paper records was in lockable cabinets. There was a limited amount of paper records stored in the basement of the town hall, behind a locked door. The panel also interviewed staff regarding these topics and offer some suggestions below.

Record Keeping and Information Technology - Recommendations:

The panel recommends immediate and ongoing attention to obtaining proper and current CJIS security compliance for anyone with access to DPD's CJIS information, devices, or the police department itself. All police department staff, and anyone that needs un-escorted access inside the police department, must have CJIS clearance. DPD relies on assistance from Lincoln County Communications to help manage this process but should appoint someone internal to DPD to

maintain awareness with these standards. These positions are called Local Area Security Officer (LASO) or Terminal Agency Coordinator (TAC) officer. The agency should have a LASO and Lincoln County Comm Center personnel can serve as TAC if allowed. CJIS training and re-certification is a continual process.

The panel recommends reviewing which town employees are authorized un-escorted access to the police department and ensure they meet the requirement set forth in CJIS and MLEAP accreditation standards. If there are employees, or other people (maintenance/cleaning staff, vendors, .etc), that do not possess the required certification, they should not be allowed unescorted access to the department. This is a security risk.

One of the challenges facing small towns is the lack of an internal Information Technology person. Some of the feedback from staff was that having an outside IT person contributed to some delays in having issues fixed, such as cruiser computers. These issues reportedly only occurred occasionally but did cause delays at work. The panel recommends that the town consult with their IT contractor to ensure there are procedures in place to limit the amount of time that technology equipment is offline or adjust their internal procedures to increase awareness of potential issues before they become a problem. DPD should identify a staff member to manage department equipment which should include periodic inspections or preventative maintenance. This could be a duty assigned to the sergeant.

DPD has used the software program called IMC for their record management system (RMS) and is converting to Central Square. This RMS is similar to many other agencies in the State. As a result, the panel has no recommendations for improving DPD's RMS use, other than that staff receive the necessary training to utilize this new system and that access to this system complies with CJIS requirements.

The panel recommends strictly managing paper records to ensure they remain secure and undamaged from climate-related issues. Basements can pose a risk for long-term storage as the humidity can degrade the quality of the records. The panel recommends looking into digital record storage options for PD and town documents requiring permanent or long-term retention, as well as periodic records management to securely destroy records no longer required for retention per the State statutes. This is also addressed in the accreditation program.

Department Communications

Ensuring effective communication within a police department is one of the most critical – and potentially most difficult – tasks for an administrator. Inefficient communication can lead to vital information being missed and an increase of rumors or inaccurate information.

As if these factors weren't enough, police administrators must keep in mind that frequently the information communicated can have serious safety and legal implications if messages are not properly sent, received, and acknowledged.

Department Communications - Findings:

DPD uses emails, written policies, and in-person communication to relay information and provide guidance to employees, much like other agencies. The chain of command includes the chief, sergeant, and officers.

The panel interviewed officers and staff and learned that most of the day-to-day communication is informal but limited due to the small size of the agency.

The staff relies heavily on electronic communications more than direct personal interaction. That is due to limited staffing and having only one officer on a shift. Officers aren't always able to directly interact with the entire staff, and department meetings are infrequent.

Staff felt that, at times, they did not have the necessary or available information or guidance to ensure a unity of effort within the department, rather, each officer was acting more individually based upon their own decision-making. Whether that is due to the current interim nature of the command structure or past practice is unsure.

Department Communications - Recommendations:

The Panel recommends adding a more formal layer of communication up and down the chain of command to ensure that the guidance from the chief is adequately relayed to the officers, and that the chief is made aware of issues brought up by officers in a timely and professional manner. The sergeant position is a key role in any department, acting as a middle-manager, bridging the gap between command and line staff. The panel recommends close collaboration between the sergeant and chief, and the sergeant and officers, to help provide a unified message. Given the current work schedule, this may require adjusting shift times to create a small overlap during the workday to ensure this vital communication happens.

In addition to regular meetings amongst officers and supervisors to provide guidance and relay information for day-to-day tasks, some departments hold monthly command and staff meetings to review crime statistics, identify problems affecting the community, and plan solutions to these problems. Other departments hold regular training sessions, such as roll-call training or annual Department training (outside of the mandatory MCJA training). These regular meetings with all or most of the staff can contribute to more effective inter-departmental communication.

Lastly, the panel recommends an annual meeting of all staff to discuss goals for the upcoming year, including budget preparation and resource or equipment acquisition, to provide focus for all staff in their day-to-day decision making as well as increase morale and esprit-de-corps.

DISPATCH

The communications center is the hub of the police department and in order to remain efficient both in productivity and officer safety, it must be able to accomplish routine tasks with ease. Most importantly, Communication Officers (dispatchers) must communicate with on-duty police officials and the public in a professional, informative, calm, and understanding manner.

Dispatch - Findings:

The Lincoln County Communications Center (LCCC) provides dispatch services for Damariscotta's public safety departments to include DPD. The Center is a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) and generally has a minimum of two dispatchers and a supervisor on duty at all times. LCCC dispatches for all communities in Lincoln County as well as four communities in Kennebec County. Damariscotta PD uses the Lincoln County Law Prime frequency, shared by Lincoln County sheriff and other area police departments.

LCCC generates Calls for Service for law enforcement complaints. Officers are responsible for verifying information and making sure all information is complete.

LCCC sets parameters with those agencies without 24-hour coverage of when to call officers out vs. hold calls for dayshift, if needed, LCCC will dispatch a LSO deputy for immediate response.

Dispatch - Recommendations:

LCCC staff expressed that they would like to maintain good communication with DPD when the next chief is selected as well as make attempts for each officer to visit LCCC to strengthen their relationship. DPD's officer-dispatcher professional relationships are like other areas, somewhat different depending on individual personalities on the radio, but LCCC feels that any issues in the past were adequately addressed by DPD chief. They would like that to continue.

PATROL SERVICES

Patrol services are the fundamental function of every law enforcement agency. The defining characteristic of an American law enforcement agency is its ability to dispatch an officer to a scene to stop a crime, mediate a dispute, take a report, or accomplish one of the nearly infinite and varied tasks expected of them. Modern day requirements for law enforcement officers can be overwhelming. Leadership within the administration, town government, and community must be sensitive to the fact they are managing humans, who make mistakes. Today's police officers are required to make split second decisions with mental health calls, critical incidents, deadly force applications, and motor vehicle crashes, all the while, unlike any other time in law enforcement, these decisions are usually captured on cameras, whether that be body cameras or cameras in the hands of bystanders. As we see daily, these split-second decisions are scrutinized in the media, police administration, and public, generally without any formal review or process. Police administrations and town leadership must be sensitive to these rapid public reviews and support their officers during stressful periods until all facts are investigated.

The demands and stress of the law enforcement profession are obstacles to recruitment and retention with the new generation of police officer candidates. New candidates are seeking balance, competitive wages, time off, growth opportunities, community policing, modern equipment, a professional environment, and support from their employer and community.

If communities such as Damariscotta wish to maintain and attract valued candidates, they should be aware that they are competing in an aggressive Maine police market. Police and town leadership need to invest with competitive wages, schedule flexibility, enticements (Special Assignments), support, and be fluid in response to changes in the regional law enforcement market surrounding their community, with municipal, state, and county law enforcement all striving to attract and retain from the same candidate pool.

Workload

Workload for the Patrol Division can be a difficult metric to define. Optimally, officers would devote 100% of their time to productive pursuit: handling calls, stopping cars, completing reports, etc. One of these productive pursuits, however, is often referred to as “proactive patrol” and refers to the officer’s travel throughout their patrol sector.

Workload-Findings:

The 2023-2024 annual report had total calls for service as being 10,984. The 2021-2022 annual report listed total calls for service as 9,149, and the previous year’s total was 8,923. These numbers are fairly high for a small department and show a busy workload for DPD officers.

The majority of each of the sampled annual reports show a majority of calls for service consisting of property checks followed by traffic control, which is in line with the needs and desires of small-town business owners and residents, with law enforcement serving in a security role, safeguarding property from theft, damage, or loss especially during nighttime patrols, and providing for traffic safety and enforcement. These are typical duties of any police department and much needed by the community.

These numbers indicate that the patrol officers of DPD are busy handling the wide variety of calls for service a small-town department sees every day.

Workload Recommendation:

Call volume is consistent with a community of this size and structure, especially when you incorporate the many different types of community engagement/community policing that officers do on a day-to-day basis. Increased workload may require additional staff, and additional staff may result in increased workload but more or improved services to the community.

One thing the panel wanted to point out was the importance of data collection. Documenting work such as calls for service or traffic stops can be very important for future decision-making, grant applications, etc. Panel recommends DPD analyze their data entry efficiency to ensure consistency and uniformity with other area departments utilizing the same/shared records management system. Guidance should be given by the chief as to what types of calls for service need recording and how to code them as there may be more than one issue each call for service addresses. Some of the data entry and data collection issues seen in various police departments deal with inconsistencies in reporting, with different sets of guidelines for different departments. Panel recommends collaborating with other Lincoln County departments to ensure consistency of reporting to make data comparisons amongst agencies more accurate.

Staffing and Deployment

It is imperative that a department ensures their officers are deployed in a way that is not only fair and complies with any collective bargaining agreement, but in a way that provides adequate coverage for the Town and promotes officer safety. The balance of having an appropriate number of officers to respond to Calls for Service is critical to maintain control of the scene, reduce Use of Force incidents, and ensure officer safety while promoting complete and thorough investigations.

Staffing and Deployment - Findings:

The Damariscotta Police Department maintains 20-hour coverage of a community of around 2,300 citizens. Patrol coverage is as follows.

- (1) Chief
- (1) Sergeant
- (3) Patrol Officers
- (3) Part-time “Reserve” Patrol Officer
- (1) Administrative position

There is no detective for this department, however regional assistance is available through the Lincoln County Sheriff’s Office.

There is no School Resource Officer. Lincoln County Sheriff’s office provides an SRO for Lincoln Academy in Newcastle.

2023 Comparative Police Staffing and 2023 Crime Rate Data*

Police Department	Sworn Officers	Population	Officers per 1000	Crime Rate	Total Reported Crimes	Clearance Rate
Damariscotta	5	2,304	2.1	16.9	39	53%
Wiscasset	6	3,900	1.5	44.1	172	62%

Waldoboro	6	5,342	1.1	17.5	94	46%
Boothbay H.	3	2,099	1.4	7.14	15	53%
Lincoln County SO	23	23,046	.99	19.48	449	50%
Maine Avg	2378	1,462,730	1.6	29.65	43,377	42%
<p>*Based on State of Maine 2023 Incident Based Reporting (IBR) reporting, full 2024 data not yet available</p> <p>https://www.maine.gov/dps/msp/sites/maine.gov.dps.msp/files/inline-files/2023%20Crime%20In%20Maine%20Final_2.pdf</p>						

According to published National Incident Based Reporting (NIBRS) reports, the ratio of officers per 1000, averages 1.9 for urban jurisdictions and 1.4 for rural jurisdictions. Currently the Damariscotta Police Department has 5 full-time sworn officers. The current Damariscotta Officers per 1000 population is 2.1. Lincoln County, and the Maine average, in the 2023 numbers, shows below-average ratio. Note, this does not take into account part-time or reserve officer positions, only full-time. These low numbers reflect the reality in current law enforcement agencies being understaffed. This was true in 2023 and has continued to present, with most agencies being understaffed not due to allotment, but lack of qualified applicants.

The term “full-time sworn” officer does not mean that these personnel are all performing regular police enforcement duties in investigations, patrol and deterrent practices. Caution should be exercised in using rates for comparative purposes, since a wide variety of factors dictate the number of employees necessary for various law enforcement agencies. The need for regulatory, correction, administrative, and assigned special duties affects the number of personnel available for regular law enforcement responsibilities.

Staffing and Deployment – Recommendations:

Current staffing allows for single-officer shifts without 24-hour coverage. Positions are staffed 20 hours a day, from 6am to 2am, with a 4-hour gap in which the Town relies on calling out a resident officer or requesting another law enforcement agency to respond (i.e. LCSO) or waiting until 6am to deal with any non-emergent calls for service. There is currently no formal contract with Lincoln County SO to provide police coverage during these off-hours; this is and has been a practice.

Having DPD staffed 24-hours a day is recommended in order to provide best practice for a modern and professional police department. With additional personnel, DPD could overlap shifts to provide time to mentor, supervise, provide necessary guidance, back each other up, handle more service calls, rely less on LCSO, etc. With one-officer shifts, their backup is usually a neighboring department’s officers, in a mutual-aid role. This is often a reality in small towns but does put officers at increase officer safety risk. Panel recommends that officer safety is always taken into account when planning staffing and deployment. If future budgets allow,

having two or more officers on each shift would be ideal, but in the meantime, panel recommends maintaining the strong partnership with area agencies for mutual aid that current exists.

Supervision

Supervisors are instrumental at all phases of police operations to maintain policies and best practices within the vision of the department and leadership. The Damariscotta Police Department is limited to one Patrol Sergeant that serves as second in command to the Police Chief (currently vacant, filled with a temporary interim chief). For administrators, having faith in a Patrol Sergeant to reliably execute the properly defined and communicated direction of the Chief is invaluable. As risk managers, a Sergeant's number one duty is to, without fail, maintain knowledge of the department's policies and procedures and ensure that the officers in his or her care religiously follow them. Without strong, committed middle managers to facilitate consistent communication up and down the chain-of-command, the chain is weak and bound to break.

Supervision – Findings:

Supervising in a modern law enforcement organization is essential to continuing community trust and respect, limit liability, and provide a safe and accountable work environment. Supervisors must have the required mentorship, training, and experience to best serve their department.

The current Sergeant has not undergone any dedicated supervisory training to date. Due to staffing, he has spent much of his time in the role of Field Training Officer, and therefore the prior Chief had been absorbing much of the sergeant's supervisory responsibilities during day shifts.

The Chief and Sergeant work four 10-hour days, generally leaving two full days (weekends) and one evening with no on-duty line supervision. They will at times receive phone calls from officers but cannot be expected to be available 24/7 all the time. Lincoln County SO will also field calls from DPD officers in the absence of an available DPD supervisor.

As another byproduct of staffing, there is minimal face-to-face contact with subordinates while working, making the role of the Sergeant much more difficult, and potentially inconsistent or ineffective.

Supervision – Recommendations:

Panel recommends all supervisors within a department obtain necessary and required training per their rank/responsibilities. This is also an MLEAP requirement. Staffing shortages and operational needs can affect a department's ability to send staff to training, but this must remain a focus. Supervisors serve as the backbone of an agency, a conduit for information up and down the chain of command, advocate for line officers, as well as a representative of the

command staff. It is a very important role within a professional agency. Having a supervisor on duty at all times can lower the liability to an agency and, if budgetary issues allow, the panel would recommend adding another layer of supervision. Some departments have supervisory ranks of “senior officer” or “officer in charge” as well as “corporal” who have the training, experience, and authority to supervise junior officers. This is difficult to do in a small department, but perhaps a future goal.

Arrests: Processing and Transport

The act of arresting a person results in restricting their free movement, searching them, and physically removing them from their location. This law enforcement function, with good reason, carries a tremendous amount of liability along with it. Arrests should be made judiciously, but without hesitation when necessary.

Arrests: Processing and Transport – Findings:

The Damariscotta Police Department averages relatively few physical arrests a year. These arrests are transported to Two Bridges Regional Jail, approximately 15-20 minutes from the community. The police station does not have a proper facility to secure a prisoner that is safe for the officer, other staff, or detainee. Most of their criminal charges are handled through court summonses, which is consistent with other Maine agencies.

The Damariscotta Police Department has three vehicles assigned to the department, two marked Ford F150 pickup trucks used for patrol, with appropriate equipment and prisoner transport divider, and one unmarked Ford Police Interceptor utility vehicle used by the chief and as a spare patrol vehicle.

Arrests: Processing and Transport – Recommendations:

To the extent possible, safety of the officers should be a priority and instances of officers being by themselves while managing an arrestee should be minimized. The Panel recognizes the limited staff but strongly encourages two officers to be present when making an arrest. Changes to the facility, such as a dedicated booking room, would enhance safety, otherwise, the panel recommends continuing to transport physical arrests directly to Two Bridges Regional Jail, which offers a more controlled and staffed facility to process arrests.

Use of Force

The Maine Criminal Justice Academy teaches new recruits that “law enforcement is under a microscope.” They learn early on that their every move is watched, scrutinized, and judged by the public. Nowhere is this more accurate than the rare instances when officers must use physical force against a fellow citizen.

Law enforcement officers are empowered by State statute to use non-deadly force in the defense of themselves or a third person against non-deadly force or to effect the arrest of a criminal suspect. Officers are empowered to use deadly force in defense of themselves or a third person against deadly force, or to affect the arrest of a person when the person has committed a crime involving deadly force and is likely to endanger human life unless apprehended without delay. Luckily, the vast majority of police officers serve their entire career without being required to use deadly force.

A great deal of department resources are focused on the procurement, maintenance, and training for proficiency in the tools used to deliver force: pain compliance tools like pepper spray and impact weapons, neuro-muscular incapacitation weapons like electronic control devices (frequently referred to as TASERs), and deadly weapons such as firearms.

Use of force application is a high liability component for Law Enforcement and therefore proper documentation in the form of Use of Force Reports is critical. These reports are instrumental to all agencies in identifying trends, prescribing changes in practices, policy, or training, and thus, lowering liability and making things safer for both officers and the public.

Use of Force – Findings:

Situational Use of Force (UOF) is a statutorily mandated policy and therefore, the Board of Trustees of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy has established nine individual minimum standards which must be contained in each law enforcement agency's policy. A review of Damariscotta Police Department's Use of Force Policy revealed that it is properly updated (as of the MLEAP assessment in December of 2023) and contains the minimum standards as required by both the BOT and MLEAP.

Per policy, any officer who uses physical force is required to complete a Use of Force Report as outlined in DPD's Use of Force Policy (O-2). All Use of Force Reports are to be maintained in a secure location, in this case, the Chief's office.

As mentioned prior in this report under Record Keeping, in the recent yearly submissions to the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, the Department noted that there were no complaints of excessive force. This is a commendable trend.

Use of Force – Recommendations:

During staff interviews, there appeared to be some confusion regarding when officers need to file a Use-of-Force report. One officer thought that reporting Use of Force was determined generally by outside complaints, or if there was an internal review, rather than a mandated requirement anytime officers use physical force, less-than-lethal, or lethal tools. This is an indication of staff not being familiar with current policies, which require regular review.

Panel recommends regular policy review with a priority on high-liability events, like Use of Force. Use of Force reporting is outlined in DPD's Use of Force policy O-2, section XI. Officers must be familiar with this policy. Policy review is also a requirement to maintain MLEAP accreditation.

Officers should know when to apply proper use of force, when to report it, how to apply force legally and receive regular training on Methods of Arrest, Restraint, and Control (M.A.R.C). This will lower liability for the Town in case of a lawsuit or improper/excessive use of force finding.

The relatively small number of physical arrests made by DPD each year does not make this a secondary priority. Panel does want to commend DPD's historical proper use of force, as observed in a review of available Use of Force reports. This reflects positively on the Department and training received-to-date.

INVESTIGATIONS

The Damariscotta Police Department's response to crime and its success in investigating criminal activity is critical in judging the agency's ability to respond to community demands. Additionally, the professional pride that comes with successfully investigating and suppressing crime is invaluable to everyone affiliated with the law enforcement agency.

The investigation of serious crimes often requires the acquisition of special training. Complex investigations can take long periods of time – often measured in months – to complete. The mobile nature of our society means that in many cases, crimes stretch beyond the boundaries of one law enforcement agency's jurisdiction. Processing crimes scenes and thoroughly examining today's digital evidence is very time consuming. Generally, every home, person, and business has some form of video. If given the proper time, today's law enforcement professionals can dive deep into any incident and find key components which could identify the culprit, it's just providing the resources and training. Victims, witnesses, and suspects often live beyond town lines and investigators must travel to interview them. Serious criminal investigations generally require a single point of contact. Other people involved some way with an investigation, like sexual assault advocates, child forensic interviewers, and prosecutors need to know and to form relationships with investigators of crimes. For these reasons, when feasible, the delegation of criminal investigations to a detective (or detectives) makes sense.

Investigation – Findings:

DPD does not have an assigned detective. Officers have options to continue with follow up investigations or push these up the chain of command with may include transferring the case to Lincoln County SO detectives, or Maine State Police Major Crimes Unit, depending on the complexity of the investigation or severity of the incident. This process is common for small town departments. With that, the panel found no significant areas of concern during a review of past investigations handled by DPD officers and that investigations forwarded to LCSO or MSP were appropriate given the variables presented.

Investigations – Recommendations:

Panel recommends that DPD look at providing training to officers interested in enhancing their skills in investigations and allow them to obtain experience working complex or felony cases. If future staffing allows, panel recommends establishing a detective position, which could supplement patrol as needed, to provide a dedicated investigator for Damariscotta child abuse, sexual assault, felony property crimes, or other crimes against persons. Creating such a position would not only benefit victims of these crimes but could also boost morale by providing more professional development and career enhancement to interested officers.

Property and Evidence Management

A department's professionalism could well be measured by how closely its handling of property and evidence meets industry best practices. The care and preservation of physical property – whether it is evidence in a criminal proceeding or not – is a department function which if not executed properly, could expose the department to civil liability, lost prosecution, and professional embarrassment. It is easy for a defense attorney to successfully attack a shoddy chain-of-custody and evidence storage integrity issues in a criminal case. In addition, some items which are routinely stored by police departments can, if not handled properly, degrade and result in mold which can result in serious health conditions.



Property and Evidence Management – Findings:

DPD's evidence room and procedures were updated prior to their December 2023 MLEAP assessment to meet those standards. During the recent transitions in various staff, DPD's reserve officer Joseph Booth (former full-time officer with DPD and now a full-time Lincoln County SO deputy) has managed the property and evidence. During our on-site visits to DPD, the panel observed that the temporary evidence/property lockers were full and awaiting documentation and entry into the evidence room and tracking system. Having a part-time/reserve officer responsible for the department's evidence room poses some risk to the department in terms of proper evidence/property management.

The interim chief was able to access the evidence room to show the panel how it was organized and it appeared to still meet accreditation standards.

Property and Evidence Management – Findings (Secondary Storage)

DPD has access to the basement of the town hall for additional storage but during the panel visit, no property or evidence other than department equipment was stored in these areas.

There was no Department-owned area to store large property/evidence, like seized vehicles.

Property and Evidence Management – Recommendations:

The panel recommends assigning and training a full-time officer as the evidence/property room manager (EPM). This will ensure proper evidence management, ensure a strict chain of command, and limit liability for the Department and Town. The panel recommends maintaining MLEAP accreditation standards which will ensure proper management occurs. At its current state, the evidence room appears to meet the needs of the department and comply with accreditation standards. For larger pieces of evidence, storage can become an issue, which will be addressed below under Facilities recommendations.

FACILITIES



The Damariscotta Police Department is established in an annex to the town hall, neither of which were purpose-built to serve as such. A police department or other government building should instill confidence and capability. These features are generated by the cleanness of the building, lighting, signage, and pride of the organization, no matter the size and financial limitations of the community.

Facilities - Findings:

The exterior of the building consists of a professional outward appearance, clad with bricks and white trim. The entrance to the police department is via the rear parking lot and is separate from the public town hall entrance. The police department's entrance door appears in need of repair. This opens into a small hallway leading to a secure interior door, reception window on the left of the hall, and a non-operational bathroom on the right side of the hall. Inside, the police department consists of several rooms, roughly split left to right, with patrol, reception, and sergeant's office on one side, with the chief's office, hallway, conference/break room, evidence room, and largely unused side entrance hallway. This layout creates somewhat of a division between the chief and on-duty staff but given the limited amount of personnel on duty at a time, may not have a great effect on operational capacity. The interior of the building does look well-used, but functional. Staff remarked that they lacked regular maintenance and

custodial work, that the building's surveillance system is not actively monitored (it does record), but that they were generally happy with the facility, given what it is, and feel safe inside.

Facilities – Recommendations:

The panel recommends that the town look into making a few minor improvements to the police department end of the building, such as a new or repaired exterior entrance door, a functioning public restroom, and overall cleanliness, to help present a professional environment for staff and the public.

The panel has no recommendations on changing the layout of the department, as it appears to make the best use of available space and meet MLEAP accreditation standards. The aforementioned need for booking room space may be a future consideration for facility improvement.

The panel recommends a more active use of the surveillance system to provide for more situational awareness by the limited staff inside to be able to respond to potential issues.

The panel did not observe any indoor vehicle storage or maintenance areas for use by the police department. The department contracts with a civilian automotive repair facility for maintenance and storage of seized vehicles.

Having such an area to secure oversized property or evidence and/or conduct routine vehicle maintenance on department vehicles can be beneficial to normal police operations as well as offer more secure evidence storage. Utilizing an off-site or non-Department owned area can expose the Town and storage facility owner to liability if the property is mismanaged, chain of custody disrupted, or damage to property occurs during storage. Panel recommends considering these issues carefully if/when a large piece of property, such as a vehicle, is impounded as evidence. DPD may be able to cooperate with another area law enforcement agency for assistance with secure storage needs.

EQUIPMENT

The patrol division is the most important component of any police agency, and the equipment that the agency provides to the officers is indicative of the municipality's commitment and is vital to the officers' ability to perform their jobs. Today's police cruisers, effectively "mobile offices" are instruments of technology which contain advanced weapon systems, cameras, radar units, and mobile computers, providing maximum safety for the officers. These vehicles and the equipment maintained within them are one of the first indicators of a professional workforce that the public observes every day. Cruisers are mobile billboards and can serve as recruitment tools. They are essential in maintaining morale for the officers, as they must feel confident with current technology and trends compared with other local law enforcement agencies and national standards. They must be comfortable and functional.

Although it may appear that law enforcement equipment has a relatively short useful life, it is important to remember that much of the equipment is often used in a difficult or even hostile environment. Additionally, multiple officers during a workweek use much of the equipment. Regardless, the Town must consider those capital items which support their officers as emergency equipment that must be replaced or repaired on schedule.

In addition to cruisers and the myriad of technology and equipment mounted within, a typical department's equipment also includes station computers, firearms, less-lethal (pepper spray, TASER, batons), body worn cameras, and more.

Equipment - Findings:

Presently, the Damariscotta Police Department has 3 vehicles in their inventory. The two front-line patrol vehicles are Ford F-150 pickup trucks, and the Chief's vehicle which is a Ford Police Interceptor Utility (also used as a spare patrol vehicle if needed).

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILEAGE	ASSIGNMENT
2022	Ford	F150	94k	Patrol
2024	Ford	F150	12k	Patrol
2020	Ford	Police Interceptor	79k	Chief/Patrol

Patrol Rifles: Officers have individually assigned AR patrol rifles.

Mobile Data Terminals (cruiser computers): Available in each patrol vehicle

Exterior Vest: Officers are issued standard outer vest carriers with appropriate uniform markings and necessary equipment, to include individually assigned Tasers.

Body Camera: The Damariscotta Police Department currently utilizes the Axon Body 3 BWCs.

Cruiser Equipment: Axon Fleet cruiser camera system.

Cruiser Set-Up: Each cruiser has a mobile radio, emergency supplies to include a first-aid kit, tourniquets, AED, and Narcan. Both patrol vehicles have a secure prisoner transport area in the rear seat, one with a half-divider and one with a full divider.

Equipment – Recommendations:

DPD's equipment appears to be modern and in good condition. Panel recommends maintaining a replacement schedule for issued equipment, vehicles, and technology devices. Panel did receive feedback from some officers that it can be more difficult to quickly turn the patrol pickup trucks during traffic enforcement due to the truck's larger turn radius than a regular

patrol SUV. DPD may want to consider purchasing a police SUV during the next vehicle replacement schedule if this remains a concern by officers.

Panel commends DPD's efforts in ensuring its officers have modern equipment such as regularly replaced body armor (there are federal payment program and grants to offset costs), Tasers, and body cameras as these have become a very necessary part of law enforcement practices, not only for safety, but to lower liability for agencies.

PERSONNEL

Thus far, the Panel's review of the Damariscotta Police Department focused on the agency's organization, the facility, the vehicles that officers drive around, and the work that DPD officers do. This section of the review will examine the most important agency ingredient of all – the people who answer the previously mentioned calls, who drive the cruisers, and who occupy the building. This report is dedicated to them and the important work they do.

Recruitment / Selection / Retention

The activities undertaken by an agency to encourage applicants for open positions, and how one or more of those applicants are then chosen to receive job offers is likely to vary little from one Maine department to the next. Once employees are hired, the ways in which they are retained will likely fall into predictable categories as well.

Small agencies typically have difficulty committing assets toward recruitment due to the infrequency of hiring – as an example, large agencies are always hiring, so it makes sense to invest in recruiting materials and media and pay for targeted advertising when necessary.

When an agency advertises for an open position, they are faced with a choice of how to conduct the hiring process. Traditionally, departments open the hiring process for applications for a set period of time and, when that time expired, they would review the applications, select those that were qualified, and begin with testing, interviews, etc. The current trend of minimal applicants, however, requires more aggressive hiring. This can be achieved by screening each application for an open position as soon as it is received so that a qualified applicant can immediately be contacted and put through the hiring process. Once an individual is made a conditional job offer, the process everywhere in Maine is fairly standard: a thorough background investigation, psychological exam, polygraph examination, and physical examination (or in the case of an individual with prior law enforcement, review of those documents from their former employer) are all important steps.

Finally, retention in most law enforcement agencies can be summarized as follows: employees who feel that they are paid well, provided with reasonable opportunities for professional development through training and specialization, equipped with adequate gear to safely do their jobs, and are valued and treated well by their employer are much more likely to stay put. When an officer resigns, an exit interview may provide insight into whether there are any

internal conditions which contributed to their decision to move along. Turnover is not always an indication of an unhealthy organization; Maine officers are fairly portable due to a transferable retirement plan, and today's workforce is generally much more mobile than that of 20 years ago.

Recruitment / Selection / Retention – Recommendations:

DPD appears to have had a relatively long stretch with little hiring opportunities until relatively recently. Given its size and relatively few openings over the years, recruitment has occurred in a more traditional manner. Like many departments, the applicant pool has been limited, but DPD has managed to fill vacancies with quality people.

Retaining these officers can be challenging. The panel recommends that the town closely look at ways to retain officers by providing them with professional development opportunities and maintain a competitive pay and benefits package in comparison with other area departments.

DPD has a hiring and selection policy, in accordance with MLEAP standards.

One of the main points of concern noted by the panel is DPD's current retirement plan. Officers seemed confused about what exactly their plan is, some saying they thought they were signing up for a different retirement plan, only to learn it wasn't what they expected. Most police departments in Maine currently offer Maine State retirement plan 2C or 3C, which is a 20 or 25 year retirement, 50-66% of high three years average of pay, with no age requirement. DPD officers currently share the same retirement plan as other town employees. The panel strongly recommends the town consider making DPD's retirement plan match most of the police departments in Maine, to make DPD as competitive as possible. Note: as of this report, efforts have been made by the Town to amend the retirement plan for non-union qualified employees (e.g., police chief). The panel feels that this is a step in the right direction.

Officers and staff did say they appreciated the health insurance plan currently in place. Health insurance can be a big motivator to retaining staff. Panel recommends maintaining this plan.

Regarding pay, DPD's current collective bargaining agreement, which will be covered later in this report, shows a low-to-average pay scale for area departments, a bit lower on the starting end, but becoming more competitive for senior officers as they progress in years of service. The panel recommends a continual focus on offering competitive pay during each bargaining agreement session. The current hiring process for chief offers a salary range from \$87,000-\$100,000. The panel feels that this is on par with other small town police departments and offers the same recommendation to continually study comparable salaries in order to retain quality employees.

Promotions

Due to the pyramid shape of the traditional law enforcement organization, promotional opportunities may be uncommon, and statistically most police officers never achieve rank. Due to the huge amount of liability that front-line supervisors, seconds-in-command, and chiefs are required to minimize and manage, these processes are hugely important and may be among the most momentous decisions made by a unit of government.

Promotions – Findings:

In recent years, DPD has been stable with little to no promotions, having a chief and sergeant for several years running. A year ago, the sergeant position became vacant after the then-sergeant obtained a chief of police position in a small police department in a neighboring county. This year, the chief position became vacant when the chief left to become a chief deputy for a neighboring county's sheriff's office. This led to a promotional process for sergeant, filled by the only applicant from within the department, and a currently (as of this writing) listed chief of police vacancy yet to be filled.

The last sergeant's promotional process involved a resume and letter of intent, interview with citizens and three police chiefs. The current Chief's process is similar, and includes assistance from the Maine Chiefs of Police Association.

Promotions – Recommendations:

Promotional processes should be competitive, fair, and result in selecting a qualified person for the job. Many agencies have a policy and/or language in a collective bargaining agreement, that sets for the process for conducting a promotion. The panel found no policy that covers the process for holding a promotional process and recommends seeking such as policy, tailored to their agency, to ensure consistency in each promotional process, set forth expectations for both the applicant and position, and provide both fairness and transparency of the process, to ensure the right people are promoted into the right positions. Once that is complete, adequate training and mentorship should be provided for those newly promoted staff. This can help with both what is expected in the chain of command, as well as morale for the whole department.

Morale

Morale is a very important part in any organization. Pay and benefits are frequently considered a top contributor to high morale, along with work environment and fellow employees. Toxic leaders or employees can drag everyone else down, while the converse is true. Motivated employees or leaders with a good attitude can go a long way to creating high morale. Within law enforcement, this is especially true, given the stressful work environment, relatively high risk for personal safety, increased liability and ever-present public scrutiny.

Morale – Findings:

The panel's interviews with staff point to a degree of morale depending on the individual interviewed. Some employees were happy with their jobs, others, less so. This is not unique to

DPD. Overall, most employees appeared to be generally satisfied with their jobs and department overall, with some expressing some anxiety and hope in the selection of a new chief.

Staff mentioned things that contributed to good morale: training, equipment, health insurance, community engagement. Things that hurt morale: lack of accountability, lack of leadership, current retirement plan, collective bargaining unit, non-competitive pay.

Morale – Recommendations:

The panel recommends, upon selection and hiring of a new chief, a focus on building a cohesive team by providing strong leadership and accountability. Some staff comments pointed to a feeling that the department is more a collection of several individual officers working independently and not as part of a team effort. Planning and conducting regular all-department training or meetings and providing well-structured goals with periodic evaluation may improve morale.

Overall, most employees seemed happy with the department but would like to see improvements once a new chief is selected.

Labor Relations / Collective Bargaining – Findings:

Labor relations is a necessity in most police agencies in Maine. Most police officers belong to a collective bargaining unit that can advocate for competitive pay and benefits, among many other things affecting the work environment and job tasks. A good relationship between a bargaining unit and management can positively influence operational capacity. Periodic contract negotiations ensure a degree of competitiveness with other law enforcement. Officers can request a union representative and legal advice to help with personnel matters or potential lawsuits stemming from their job duties.

The panel found that this is an area of concern for Damariscotta. While there is a collective bargaining agreement signed by the town and Damariscotta officers, there is no formal association with the Maine Association of Police (M.A.P.). It is the panel's understanding that this process had been started but never finalized and since then, several contractual periods have occurred. This has caused concern for most of the officers and former staff interviewed.

Labor Relations / Collective Bargaining – Recommendations:

The panel recommends that DPD union members focus on re-establishing a relationship with either M.A.P. or another union while maintaining a positive relationship with the town. Their Collective Bargaining Agreement appears fairly standard but some areas need improvement as the language is unclear, such as the section on retirement benefits where it mentions Plan AC and in the next paragraph, Plan 3C, which are vastly different. This language may have contributed to the confusion about what retirement plans the officers currently have.

Having a more professional union representation for officers is expected to increase both morale as well as provide some measure of protection for officers during legal or personnel actions, which can help with recruitment and retention.

Internal Affairs

The internal affairs (IA) function refers to the process by which the department investigates complaints or information otherwise received which, if true, would constitute a violation of a department policy, state, or federal law. The objective, fair, and prompt investigation of complaints is absolutely necessary to keep the community's trust that bad actions by the town's police officers will be addressed.

Because investigations into employee misconduct involve employee rights as defined by contract and labor law, it is imperative that the person conducting these investigations is properly trained to do so and possesses the temperament to both aggressively root out wrongdoing while simultaneously convincing officers that he/she cares about them individually and the preservation of the department's untarnished reputation.

Internal Affairs – Findings:

Since before DPD received accreditation, there have been no formal Internal Affairs investigations conducted. External and internal complaints seem limited to an informal level, handled by previous chief or supervisors. This is not uncommon in small departments and reflects on the professionalism of officers. The panel did not uncover any past or current issues that cause concern regarding complaints or how they were handled by the agency. Their 2023 MLEAP accreditation found that DPD met the standards surrounding these issues.

Internal Affairs – Recommendations:

The panel recommends that DPD continue to maintain the MLEAP standards regarding investigations of employee misconduct and follow their policy as written, which includes training for staff to conduct internal investigations. This will protect the agency and town from liability regarding personnel matters or complaints. The panel recommends that officers continue to perform their duties with professionalism to maintain the low-to-zero amount of complaints received from the public. Internally driven complaints should be investigated by trained staff and forwarded to the chief for review and decision-making. DPD should consider outsourcing any serious IA's to another agency for the fact-finding portion, leaving the chief and town manager as the decision-makers.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Policies and Procedures manual is the single most important guide for every member of the police department, from the rookie trainee up to and including the Chief of Police. There is no

set of written documents as important to the orderly operation and administration of a law enforcement organization.

It is very important for the policy manual to be organized in a clear and logical fashion, so that users can find what they are looking for. Users should also find it a reasonable task to read through the manual and remember what is in it. No employee should ever be in doubt about what is expected of him or her in terms of job expectations or performance as prescribed.

The Policies and Procedures manual must be thought of by all employees as a current and real working document and resource that is in constant use, not just when an employee is being considered for discipline. This means it should be regularly reviewed so that outdated information, policies, and procedures are either updated or removed. The best manual is one that is so clear and complete that no one is ever surprised about their responsibilities and duties.

In Maine, there are 14 policies which police departments are required to have by law. For those policies, minimum policy standards are developed by the Maine Criminal Justice Academy. The Maine Chiefs of Police Association then uses those minimum standards to craft model policies for departments to use if they so choose. Departments are not required to use the model policies, but they must ensure that they have policies containing the minimum standards.

In addition to the model policies, the Maine Chiefs of Police Association also produces numerous other model policies, most of which are adopted in some form by police departments in the State. These model policies are also part of the Maine Law Enforcement Accreditation Program (MLEAP) standards.

Policies and Procedures – Findings:

DPD has the required amount of policies based on MCJA, MCOPA, and MLEAP model policies and standards. These policies were examined by the MLEAP accreditation assessors in 2023. These policies are still in effect and were provided to the panel by the interim chief. The policies offer the best practices for departments as well meeting all requirements of the MCJA Board of Trustees and State laws. The policies are online via NEOGOV software, which all employees have access to. There were paper copies of the most recent policies in the chief's office.

Policy and Procedure – Recommendations:

The panel recommends maintaining a regular review cycle of all policies and continual updates by the chief and all officers, per accreditation standards or changes in either MCJA BOT guidance or State laws.

Interviews with some staff pointed to a lack of recent familiarization with current policies, where they were, or how to access them. This needs to be addressed immediately and should be a focus for the incoming chief as the next MLEAP re-accreditation period occurs later next

year (December 2026). There are annual requirements in MLEAP that, given the recent turnover of key staff, may result in areas missed and cause issues with the next accreditation cycle.

DPD can add or modify existing policies as long as they meet the minimum requirements set forth by the governing bodies and best practices. New policies come regularly. Some agencies contract with professional services to provide policy and procedures maintenance. Many MLEAP accredited agencies currently use this practice and it appears effective, helping agencies stay current and comply with new law or case law updates. When establishing or reviewing policies, DPD should consider needs or issues specific to their community, and draft guidance based upon those needs and with best practices and legal guidance in mind.

TRAINING

The importance of a robust training program cannot be overstated. A well-trained police officer not only benefits himself or herself, but other fellow officers, their organization, and the community they serve.

Although small departments may not have SWAT teams or K-9 units, they must be able to provide basic services to the community.

Society expects the police to know all civil, criminal, and motor vehicle laws to obtain confessions, fingerprints, and DNA. They also expect the police to be in excellent physical shape, proficient with firearms, drive with due regard, and apprehend all criminals without injury. Most of society knows this is a myth. However, wise police administrators know that well trained police officers do in fact catch criminals, obtain confessions, collect fingerprints, DNA, and other relevant crime scene evidence. They are also able to drive defensively, know the appropriate criminal codes, and answer all Calls for Service.

These Calls for Service may be as minor as a barking dog complaint or as serious as a person with a gun. The police must respond to each call professionally and demonstrate their ability to investigate the complaint and reach a final conclusion.

State statutes mandate that all law enforcement officers, either full or part-time, have annual mandatory training. This training includes 20 hours of mandatory topics selected by the Academy, and 20 hours of elective training (approved by the Chief) in a two-year period. In 2025, the mandatory topics include two hours each in: Firearms qualification, new law and case law updates, four hours of Mechanic of Restraint and Control (M.A.R.C.), Trauma Informed training for Law Enforcement, and officer wellness.

In addition to the provision of training to meet mandatory minimums, departments use training to correct performance deficiencies, to enhance department capabilities, or to provide professional development. For purposes of this report, professional development refers to training that prepares officers to serve an enhanced role in the department. These roles could

include an instructor certification so that the officer can teach critical skills to his/her teammates and other area officers. It might include a special skill needed (or required) at the PD, such as Civil Rights Officer training, so the department has personnel prepared to respond to and investigate hate crimes. It might also include training that is provided to prepare an interested employee for a future opportunity (promotion to Sergeant, assignment to Detective, etc.).

Training - Findings:

DPD's training budget currently sits at \$7500 as a yearly budget expense. MCJA's Basic Law Enforcement Training Program costs are currently \$3500. Other required training costs can range from free to a thousand dollars, depending on the course. DPD appears to have made the best use of these funds to obtain training for officers. Effective training can lower liability and increase the capabilities and professionalism of officers.

The panel interviews concluded that historically, DPD has received adequate training for their officers. Some officers are more proactive in seeking out training than others, but the former chief was reportedly good about pushing training opportunities down to officers.

DPD conducts joint training with others small departments to pool resources and cut costs. This is necessary to meet training requirements.

Training - Recommendations:

The panel recommends DPD continue to seek out low-cost measures to obtain elective or necessary training certifications that benefit their department, meet mandatory requirements regarding accreditation, and set up the Department for long-term benefits by certifying junior officers in certain training certifications like firearms, M.A.R.C., Taser, etc.

Officers should be encouraged to seek out professional development that will make DPD more productive and serve their community well. Low performing officers should receive training pertinent to their job. High performing officers should be rewarded with specialized elective training.

Some departments designate certain supervisors to serve as training managers, ensuring that required training is completed, that officers who are interested in certain training receive it, and that the Department has enough trainers in certain tasks to ensure compliance with the yearly training requirements. For small departments, this often falls to the chief, in some cases, the next in command (sergeant). The panel recommends maintaining a focus on these training requirements and in officer professional development to meet all applicable training requirements for a law enforcement agency.

Forecasting training needs should be part of the budgetary process, ensuring that appropriate funds are set aside and available for that purpose. For example, DPD may need to send more

than one officer to the academy in a fiscal year. If so, they will need to allocate enough money to cover those costs as well as provide other annual or necessary training for other officers.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the panel was impressed with DPD's staff and their commitment to their community. This was reflected in the many positive reviews from community members, business owners, and fellow law enforcement agencies interviewed. Small town policing requires a close connection to the community they serve. The Town of Damariscotta should be very proud of the officers and staff of their small department.

Damariscotta is a service center for Lincoln County year-round, sees a lot of tourists during the summer, and hosts the annual Pumpkinfest that attracts thousands of people to town. The panel was impressed that DPD can do what it does with its relatively small contingent of full and part-time officers. The panel is of the opinion that DPD could offer even more services and value to their community with increased staff and a 24-hour schedule.

Areas to focus on include maintaining MLEAP accreditation, complying with mandatory training requirements, such as CJIS and supervisor training, a regular review of policies and procedures, and increased Department-wide meetings to strengthen the Department's unity of effort and esprit de corps. Addressing personnel issues and concerns with retirement plans and offering competitive pay and benefits will help with recruiting and retention. DPD's incoming chief will face these challenges but should feel free to reach out to the Maine Chiefs of Police Association for any help required that stem from these recommendations.

This Review Panel has made its recommendations based on its collective law enforcement, supervisory, and leadership experience. The Panel believes these recommendations to be reasonable and consistent with best practices. In order to ensure accuracy and fairness, the Panel repeatedly and thoroughly reviewed all findings. The Panel hopes that you find this work product useful to you as you chart a course for the future of the Damariscotta Police Department, which is believed to be bright.

List of Recommendations

- A deliberate effort on a regular basis to set goals, draft plans, allocate resources, and measure success.
- Further focus on maintaining an appropriate police budget reflecting the needs of a modern, accredited agency, challenged with competing for scarce resources in the form of employees with other police departments who may have more to offer.
- The police chief should encourage the input of all employees to help in the determination of department needs and goals, such as in an annual all-staff meeting or periodic command and staff meetings.
- Maintaining the strong relationship DPD has with its community by continuing to focus on their department mission and values, community outreach, and involvement with community organizations and events.
- The crime analysis data should be examined by the chief and all sworn staff.
- Immediate and ongoing attention to obtaining proper and current CJIS security compliance for anyone with access to DPD's CJIS information, devices, or the police department itself.
- Reviewing which town employees are authorized un-escorted access to the police department and ensure they meet the requirement set forth in CJIS and MLEAP accreditation standards.
- Consult with their IT contractor to ensure there are procedures in place to limit the amount of time that technology equipment is offline or adjust their internal procedures to increase awareness of potential issues before they become a problem.
- Staff receive the necessary training to utilize the new RMS and that access to this system complies with CJIS requirements.
- Strictly managing paper records to ensure they remain secure and undamaged from climate-related issues.
- Looking into digital record storage options for PD and town documents requiring permanent or long-term retention, as well as periodic records management to securely destroy records no longer required for retention per the State statutes.
- Adding a more formal layer of communication up and down the chain of command to ensure that the guidance from the chief is adequately relayed to the officers, and that the chief is made aware of issues brought up by officers in a timely and professional manner.
- Close collaboration between the sergeant and chief, and the sergeant and officers, to help provide a unified message.
- An annual meeting of all staff to discuss goals for the upcoming year, including budget preparation and resource or equipment acquisition, to provide focus for all staff in their day-to-day decision making as well as increase morale and esprit-de-corps.
- LCCC staff expressed that they would like to maintain good communication with DPD when the next chief is selected as well as make attempts for each officer to visit LCCC to strengthen their relationship.
- Analyze their data entry efficiency to ensure consistency and uniformity with other area departments utilizing the same/shared records management system.

- Collaborating with other Lincoln County departments to ensure consistency of reporting to make data comparisons amongst agencies more accurate.
- Officer safety is always taken into account when planning staffing and deployment.
- Maintaining the strong partnership with area agencies for mutual aid that current exists.
- All supervisors within a department obtain necessary and required training per their rank/responsibilities.
- Having a supervisor on duty at all times can lower the liability to an agency and, if budgetary issues allow, the panel would recommend adding another layer of supervision.
- Instances of officers being by themselves while managing an arrestee should be minimized.
- Continuing to transport physical arrests directly to Two Bridges Regional Jail, which offers a more controlled and staffed facility to process arrests.
- Regular policy review with a priority on high-liability events, like Use of Force.
- Look at providing training to officers interested in enhancing their skills in investigations and allow them to obtain experience working complex or felony cases.
- If future staffing allows, the panel recommends establishing a detective position.
- Assigning and training a full-time officer as the evidence/property room manager (EPM).
- The panel recommends maintaining MLEAP accreditation standards which will ensure proper management occurs.
- Look into making a few minor improvements to the police department end of the building, such as a new or repaired exterior entrance door, a functioning public restroom, and overall cleanliness, to help present a professional environment for staff and the public.
- Active use of the surveillance system to provide for more situational awareness by the limited staff inside to be able to respond to potential issues.
- Utilizing an off-site or non-Department owned area can expose the Town and storage facility owner to liability if the property is mismanaged, chain of custody disrupted, or damage to property occurs during storage. Panel recommends considering these issues carefully if/when a large piece of property, such as a vehicle, is impounded as evidence. DPD may be able to cooperate with another area law enforcement agency for assistance with secure storage needs.
- Maintaining a replacement schedule for issued equipment, vehicles, and technology devices.
- DPD may want to consider purchasing a police SUV during the next vehicle replacement schedule if this remains a concern by officers.
- Closely look at ways to retain officers by providing them with professional development opportunities and maintain a competitive pay and benefits package in comparison with other area departments.
- Consider making DPD's retirement plan match most of the police departments in Maine, to make DPD as competitive as possible.
- Continual focus on offering competitive pay during each bargaining agreement session.

- Continually study comparable salaries in order to retain quality employees.
- Create a promotional process policy to ensure consistency in each promotional process, set forth expectations for both the applicant and position, and provide both fairness and transparency of the process, to ensure the right people are promoted into the right positions.
- Once that is complete, adequate training and mentorship should be provided for those newly promoted staff.
- Focus on building a cohesive team by providing strong leadership and accountability.
- DPD union members focus on re-establishing a relationship with either M.A.P. or another union while maintaining a positive relationship with the town.
- Continue to maintain the MLEAP standards regarding investigations of employee misconduct and follow their policy as written, which includes training for staff to conduct internal investigations.
- Officers continue to perform their duties with professionalism to maintain the low-to-zero amount of complaints received from the public.
- Consider outsourcing any serious IA's to another agency for the fact-finding portion, leaving the chief and town manager as the decision-makers.
- Maintaining a regular review cycle of all policies and continual updates by the chief and all officers, per accreditation standards or changes in either MCJA BOT guidance or State laws.
- When establishing or reviewing policies, DPD should consider needs or issues specific to their community, and draft guidance based upon those needs and with best practices and legal guidance in mind.
- Continue to seek out low-cost measures to obtain elective or necessary training certifications that benefit their department.
- Continue to meet mandatory requirements regarding accreditation.
- Set up the Department for long-term benefits by certifying junior officers in certain training certifications like firearms, M.A.R.C., Taser, etc.
- Maintaining a focus on these training requirements and in officer professional development to meet all applicable training requirements for a law enforcement agency.
- Forecasting training needs should be part of the budgetary process, ensuring that appropriate funds are set aside and available for that purpose.