



New Berlin Police Department

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PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM: Police Department

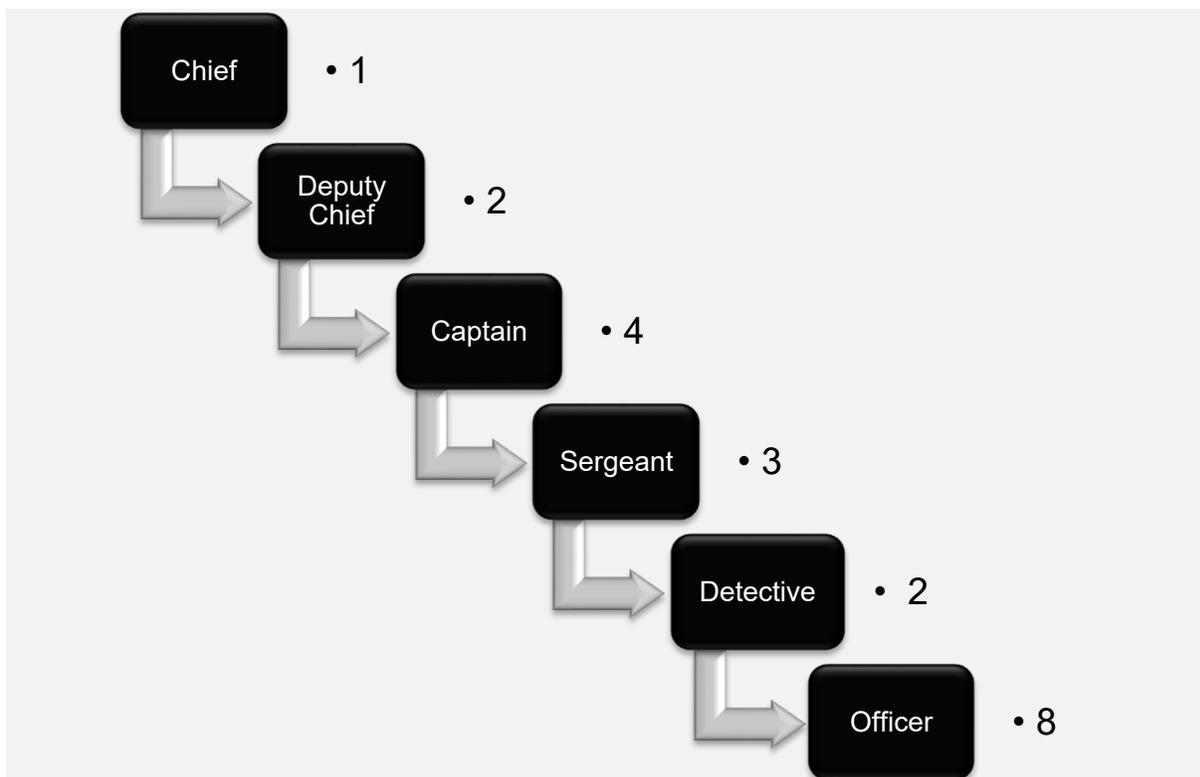
- New Position Request
- Rationale

CONCERN #1:

Anticipated vacancies and/or other required time off within the police department will result in staffing shortages. The following graph illustrates the number of sworn personnel who are eligible to retire by 2030. ***Note that not every officer eligible to retire will retire by 2030.***

REQUEST:

Increase police department sworn staff by three from seventy (70) to seventy-three (73) police officers.



RATIONALE:

Prior to the previous decade's economic challenges, the department had an authorized sworn staff of seventy-four (74) officers. That number was reduced through attrition and restructuring. The department currently has an authorized sworn staff of seventy (70) police officers. Sick leave, injuries, retirements, and other staffing challenges significantly impact our ability to maintain a healthy "counting" staff. Staffing shortages stemming from sick leave and injuries cannot be forecasted, but some shortages related to retirement or federal medical leave benefits can be anticipated. Since 2020, twenty-eight (28) of the current sworn New Berlin officers have been hired. This has resulted in a younger police force with growing families and additional FMLA benefits. The number of new officers joining the department will continue based on the anticipated retirements depicted above.

As explained in recent years, replacing a retired officer with a newly trained officer is difficult to manage. With the number of hours required to complete the police recruit training and department field training, most newly hired officers do not count toward minimum staffing for at least ten months. Although we have attempted to account for retirements through "pre-hires," the hiring timeline, in conjunction with the academy schedule, continues to leave us behind the staffing curve by five or more months.

Why would raising our sworn staffing help?

- If we were to raise our authorized sworn staff by three police officers to seventy-three (73), we would have the staffing necessary to overcome anticipated retirements, unanticipated resignations and other medical related challenges. In addition, it will help to reduce the number of extended shifts and then the amount of overtime required to maintain minimum daily staffing levels. As a result, the ongoing stress of long shifts will decrease.
- In addition, when staffing levels are low, the department is forced to prioritize the staffing of specialty units. In recent years, the department has been unable to fully staff both federal and local narcotic task force positions. Increasing our staffing would allow us to get back to staffing both positions or the flexibility to shift staffing to meet other regional challenges that ultimately have an impact on crime in New Berlin.

Lastly, the demands on law enforcement continue to rise due to professional, technological, and training related expectations. Maintaining a sworn staff of seventy-three (73) would allow the department to dedicate resources to traffic enforcement. We currently address traffic enforcement needs within our shift staffing or through grant

funding. When shifts are at minimum staffing, front line supervisors are required to address calls for service and are less likely to dedicate an officer to traffic enforcement.

CONCERN #2:

Ongoing/Increased mental health services and other related challenges require attention.

REQUEST:

Request to contract with Waukesha County Health and Human Services for one full-time embedded Crisis Worker.

RATIONALE:

Prior to 2010, the New Berlin Police Department staffed one full-time and one part-time police social worker to assist with a myriad of mental health concerns, sensitive crimes, critical incidents, and other related challenges. Their work bridged the gap between the patrol officers' initial response until long-term solutions were put in place by county or private resources. We found that a police social worker helped identify resources for the individual and in return reduced the number of times a police officer had contact with the same person.

The police department spends a great deal of time and resources checking on the wellbeing of citizens. During these calls, individuals often experience personal, medical, and/or a mental crisis. As a result, their actions can be unpredictable, and in some cases, violent. Having a crisis worker embedded and working directly with our staff will not only close the gap in getting citizens the help they need, but it will help reduce the stress of those involved during the crisis and reduce use of force instances.

Why contract an embedded crisis worker?

- Not only are costs to contract less, but we are also not responsible for the ongoing training associated with the position (county responsible). In addition, a contracted crisis worker will make these calls for service more efficient. In the moment, their communication with other county and private resources would reduce the time patrol resources are dedicated to the individual. As an example, the police department conducted 75 well-being checks with the same individual in 2024 and 31 in 2025 (YTD). A contracted crisis worker would assist with proactive case consultation and potential law enforcement diversion on these types of cases.

- After the initial police response and once the scene is deemed safe law enforcement could clear the scene if no emergency detention is necessary while the crisis worker completes safety planning.
- Crisis worker duties would include collaboration with local entities (city facilities, hospitals, emergency departments, school district) to build increased awareness around Crisis Intervention Services, potentially reducing inappropriate calls to law enforcement and improving crisis response time.
- Crisis duties may include providing psychological first aid to traumatic death scenes or at other related calls which could benefit from a mental health professional on scene.
- Crisis worker duties may include proactive follow-up services to assist with linkage to individual services and again reducing the number of 911 calls for service.

CONCERN #3:

Tasks previously handled by a police service tech are now divided up amongst sworn and non-sworn personnel. Due to budget constraints and other operational priorities, the position wasn't immediately filled and was then cut in the 2025 budget.

REQUEST:

Hire non-sworn police service aides with the funds previously budgeted to complete various tasks previously handled by the police services tech and now by other sworn/non-sworn staff.

RATIONALE:

Within a public safety building, there are countless duties, audits, checks of equipment, and other needs. In the past, the department employed one part-time police services technician for 24 hours per week. Historically, the person who filled this position was retired and had experience in law enforcement operations. Following the retirement of the most recent technician, we divided up the responsibilities amongst sworn and non-sworn personnel until we could assess the most effective way to perform the duties moving forward. Due to other operational matters requiring attention, we maintained those assignments for a period of time without immediately filling the position. Although the assignments are getting done, they are conducted by those who could be doing other things more appropriate for their job description. The goal in 2025 was to fill the position but re-imagine how.

Many departments around us currently staff several non-sworn community service officers or police aides, similar to our historical cadet program. Those non-sworn officers/aides perform many of the tasks that our police services technician performed but also conduct other administrative duties that a sworn officer wouldn't necessarily have to perform (i.e. parking enforcement or extra patrol type reporting and/or checks).

In addition to performing various tasks, these departments also use these positions as a recruiting tool. As a result, they fill the positions with those seeking a career in law enforcement. While employed as aides, the department has an opportunity to evaluate the individual's performance and consider the individual when filling sworn vacancies.

Our goal is to split the police services technician position that was previously budgeted into two police service aide positions and then add a couple hours to each position. The reasoning for two positions is due to the make-up of the assignment and those who fill it. These positions would likely be staffed for no more than 4 – 5 years while the employee was earning a degree. As a result, two positions would allow for some redundancy and succession planning. It would also give us an opportunity to evaluate more than one future police officer candidate at any one time.

With the number of administrative tasks, coupled with the challenges of recruiting quality police officers in today's employment climate, hiring police service aides would serve two purposes. If this was approved, the model is in place in other departments and could easily be tweaked to meet our needs.

CLOSING:

As explained, the police department has experienced hiring challenges in the last ten years. Those challenges are not unique to New Berlin. Departments across the country have experienced retention and recruiting challenges to varying degrees. We have tried to forecast as much as possible over the years and receiving council approval to pre-hire has helped but still leaves us with additional challenges.

Those challenges have increased as personnel wages and benefits continue to rise. Those increases impact the police department's overall budget and have forced us to further scrutinize our operating expenditures, leaving us to rely on unconventional funding. As a result, certain projects such as expanding our vehicle impound and fencing our employee lot have been pushed into the future. Lastly, we also know that our body-worn/fleet camera contract will need to be renewed in 2027 and based on recent research/meetings, our mobile radios (city-wide) need replacing in the next couple of years.

We have learned that the department can operate efficiently when fully staffed at seventy (70) officers, but based on all the variables explained, we struggle to stay close to that number. Considering the police department's needs, this referendum will help buffer staffing challenges similar to those faced over recent years, address mental health challenges, and help our budget address day-to-day needs.