



TO: Ernie B. McNeely, Township Manager
FROM: Michael J. McGrath, Superintendent of Police
SUBJECT: **Police Community Relations Meeting Follow Up**
DATE: April 6, 2015

On February 8, 2015, members of the Police Department, Township Senior Staff and several Township Commissioners attended a community meeting at the PALM Senior Center to discuss Police and Community Relations. This meeting was prompted by an incident on January 27th when a resident posted on the social media site, Lower Merion Community Network, a complaint about two police incidents witnessed earlier that day. The posting made several allegations regarding the investigating officer's conduct and the practices and policies of the Lower Merion Police Department.

At the community meeting, a number of residents related stories about their interaction, or a family members' interaction with Lower Merion Police Officers over the years. A common theme that was heard was that there is an ongoing perception of unequal or inappropriate interaction with the Lower Merion Police Department and minority members of our community.

The topic of race relations and policing is an issue that has gained national attention in the last several months since the incidents in Ferguson, Missouri and New York City. While it is recognized that this topic is complex and many of the problems are societal in nature, there is a piece that is police related that we can work on to ensure excellence in policing in every community.

Since this meeting, members of the Police Department, working with the Township Manager's Office, various Commissioners, and community members have discussed the experiences and feelings expressed at the meeting and come away with an understanding that there is work to be done to address those issues and perceptions. During the course of our review the following steps or actions have been identified as some initial steps to move forward and identify actions to help address the issues raised.

- Review current policies regarding citizen contacts and stops to determine where revisions may be needed.

Comparing our current policies against best practices in law enforcement showed that our policies meet current standards of best practices. All police policies have gone through a review by state and national accreditation agencies within the last six months. That means an independent review board has examined everything about the department from policies, to hiring procedures, staffing and equipment.

State accreditation review has been in place since 2006 and review of that status is conducted every three years. The project to gain national accreditation was a three year process that started in 2012 and resulted in the Police Department receiving accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies on March 21, 2015.

That said, careful attention to the way citizen contacts and stops are handled are being reviewed. Additionally, policy has already been revised to allow the Department to capture more demographic data beyond that which is required to be completed for state and federal forms. Comprehensive data will allow the department and the community to better understand policing results and impacts. While not required, or even included on state reporting forms, the Department has started to capture demographic data on motor vehicle stops and citations which after a period of time will allow for better analysis of that activity.

Additionally, staff time was expended to go through and review individual records to produce demographic statistics on all arrests in 2013 and 2014. These are provided in the attached report. These statistics are useful to some degree to characterize arrest activity. They are of limited value for a direct census population comparison since the records also indicate that the vast majority of arrests involve non-residents. The Department is exploring how to more efficiently capture and report on the resident's origin for arrest and motor vehicle incidents linked with demographic data. This is in addition to data previously compiled and released regarding soliciting license enforcement, a copy of which is also attached to this report. It is recognized that good data is needed to make valid analysis of impacts.

- Review current training and explore opportunities for enhanced training for the department.

Training on anti-bias policing and citizen engagement and interactions takes place on a continual basis. Recognizing that 25% of officers assigned to patrol have three or less years of experience, additional training emphasis will be focused on this topic. Two proposals from outside organizations to provide enhanced training on this topic are currently under review for possible implementation in the near future. Discussions have been held to address how the Lower Merion Human Relations Commission might assist with training efforts. Additionally, there has been some discussion with the Police and Community Relations Committee about producing a training video using local resident and police interviews to create a product that would allow for greater understanding for all.

- Re-examine community policing principles already in place and explore possible ways to develop more direct connection with neighborhoods and residents.

Each patrol sector in the Township has its unique features and challenges. Each requires a customized approach to delivering police services. We are examining how to best utilize patrol officers time during various shifts to improve communication and engagement in neighborhoods that they patrol. That will result

in revised operating procedures to direct more foot patrol and bike patrol in patrol zones where it makes operational sense. We are also evaluating how to assign a common core of officers to certain patrol zones on a regular basis so there is improved continuity of officers in those areas. We are also going to reinstitute our Police Citizen's Academy in the Fall of 2015.

- Determine how to reinvigorate the Police and Community Relations Committee so that it serves as a trusted bridge between the Police Department and the community.

The committee has met after many months of inactivity and has determined that meetings will continue on a monthly basis moving forward. The committee has committed to assisting with a new recruitment campaign which is likely to be scheduled for this summer in anticipation of placing officers in academy training in early 2016. Other steps identified by the committee are encouraging more interaction between police and residents through localized "neighborhood forums" to address issues that impact specific neighborhoods or even individual blocks of a neighborhood, increase the time officers spend at community centers and playgrounds interacting with neighborhood youth, and increasing bike patrols in residential neighborhoods.

- Review best practices at other police departments and communities where trust and community bonds have been enhanced.

Ongoing review. Recently, the President's Taskforce on 21st Century Policing issued an extensive report on recommendations for improvements in policing nationwide. This report is being reviewed by staff to determine how specific recommendations can enhance the professional policing services provided in our community. All police personnel have been provided the Taskforce Report and a speech regarding police and community relations in the nation delivered on February 12th at Georgetown University by FBI Director James Comey.

The actions noted above are not to be construed as the only steps necessary to address this topic. As part of our long term approach, we need to continue, in various forums, the dialog with the community, discuss these recommendations and any additional concepts with the Board of Commissioners, and work with the Board of Commissioners to update any Township codes and policies where deficiencies may be identified.

The overriding priority of our actions moving forward is to do the best we can to ensure that all citizens feel they are given equal police protection and service regardless of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, age or any other criteria.



TO: Ernie B. McNeely, Township Manager
FROM: Michael J. McGrath, Superintendent of Police
SUBJECT: **Crime and Arrest Statistics - 2013-2014**
DATE: March 11, 2015

A review of reported crimes and arrests over the last two years in Lower Merion Township was conducted. The information provided in this report includes information submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program* along with an overview of all arrests recorded in the Township broken down by available demographics.

The UCR Program is intended to assist in identifying law enforcement problems nationwide and tracks the following crimes, referred to as Part I Crimes: Murder and non-negligent Manslaughter, Forcible Rape, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Larceny-Theft, Motor Vehicle Theft, and Arson. These offenses were chosen because they are serious crimes, they occur with regularity in all areas of the country, and they are likely to be reported to police.

The following chart lists the Part I Crimes reported in Lower Merion Township to the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program in 2013 and 2014.

Part 1 Crimes	Total Crimes		2 Yr. Total
	2013	2014	
Murder	0	0	0
Manslaughter	0	0	0
Rape	2	2	4
Robbery	25	28	53
Aggravated Assault	11	9	20
Burglary	257	176	433
Theft Over \$50	591	543	1134
Theft Under \$50	208	181	389
Auto Theft	35	30	65
Total	1129	969	2098

* **Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program**

An annual publication in which the FBI compiles the volume and rate of violent and property crime offenses for the nation and by state. Individual law enforcement agency data are also provided for those contributors supplying 12 months complete offense data.

The following statistical information was retrieved from the Lower Merion Police Department Records Management System (RMS) for the calendar years 2013 and 2014. These statistics include all arrests from summary to felony level offenses which amount to a total of 3,120 arrests. These statistics do not include traffic law citations.

Total arrests by race and average age.

Total Arrests Based on Race 2013 & 2014			
Race	Arrests	Percentage*	Average Age
White	2083	66%	27.93
Black or African American	939	30%	30.78
Asian	87	3%	28.56
All other	11	<1%	-
Total	3120	100%	-

*Rounded Percentage

Total arrests by race, gender and average age.

Total Arrests Based on Race and Gender 2013 & 2014			
Race/Gender	Arrests	Percentage*	Average Age
White/Male	1558	50%	27.98
White/Female	525	17%	27.80
Black/Male	693	22%	30.78
Black/Female	246	8%	31.72
Asian/Male	55	2%	29.59
Asian/Female	32	1%	26.82
All other	11	<1%	-
Total	3120	100%	-

The 2010 U.S. Census lists the total population of Lower Merion Township at 57,825. Based on how residents identified themselves, the Race and Ethnicity of the Township is as follows:

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
White	49,563	85.7%
Asian	3,488	6.0%
Black or African American	3,246	5.6%
Two or More Races	1,081	1.9%
Other (1)	447	0.8%
Total	57,825	
Hispanic or Latino (2)	1,718	2.97%

Source: US Census Bureau

(1) Includes Other Races (389), American Indian & Alaskan Native Alone (39), Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander Alone(19)

(2) Hispanic origin includes members of all races and not classified as a separate race

A review of our arrest records for 2013 and 2014 shows that there were 49 arrests for violent crimes (Rape, Robbery and Aggravated Assault), 49 arrests for Burglary, and 294 arrests for Theft.

The following chart shows these arrests broken down by number and percentage of residents versus non-residents.

Arrests for Violent Crimes – Rape, Robbery and Aggravated Assault		
	Arrests	Percentage
Township Resident	10	20%
Non-Township Resident	39	80%
Arrests for Burglary		
Township Resident	2	4%
Non-Township Resident	47	96%
Arrests for Theft		
Township Resident	61	20%
Non-Township Resident	233	80%

At the recent community meeting held at the PALM Senior Center in Ardmore on February 8, 2015, a community member asked a question about the disparity in arrests between races both in Lower Merion and nationwide. She referred to a report in USA TODAY which she stated showed that in Lower Merion Township arrests of minorities were disproportionate to arrests for whites.

We researched this topic and found that the article referenced was posted on November 19, 2014. USA TODAY reported that they conducted a study that examined data that police departments report to the FBI each year. For each agency, USA TODAY compared the number of black people arrested during 2011 and 2012 to the number who lived in the area the department protects. The study found blacks are more likely than any others to be arrested in almost every city in the country, and the median rate of disproportionate arrests is about 2.6.

The article noted that their analysis found that “those disparities are easier to measure than they are to explain.” An excerpt from the article follows:

At least 1,581 other police departments across the USA arrest black people at rates even more skewed than in Ferguson, a USA TODAY analysis of arrest records shows. That includes departments in cities as large and diverse as Chicago and San Francisco and in the suburbs that encircle St. Louis, New York and Detroit.

Those disparities are easier to measure than they are to explain. They could be a reflection of biased policing; they could just as easily be a byproduct of the vast economic and educational gaps that persist across much of the USA - factors closely tied to crime rates. In other words, experts said, the fact that such disparities exist does little to explain their causes.

"That does not mean police are discriminating. But it does mean it's worth looking at. It means you might have a problem, and you need to pay attention," said University of Pittsburgh law professor David Harris, a leading expert on racial profiling.

Whatever the reasons, the results are the same: Blacks are far more likely to be arrested than any other racial group in the USA. In some places, dramatically so. Arrest rates are lopsided almost everywhere. Only 173 of the 3,538 police departments USA TODAY examined arrested black people at a rate equal to or lower than other racial groups.

Phillip Goff, president of the University of California Los Angeles' Center for Policing Equity, said such comparisons are "seductively misleading" because they say more about how racial inequities play out than about what causes them. Those disparities are closely tied to other social and economic inequities, he said, and like most things that involve race, they defy simple explanations.

"There is no doubt a significant degree of law enforcement bias that is the engine for this. But there's also no controversy that educational quality and employment discrimination lead to this," he said. "It's not an indicator of how big a problem there is with a police department. It's an aggregator of what's going on in the community." Still, he said, "there's some level of disparity that is a warning sign."

The following chart illustrates the arrest rates found in the study conducted by USA TODAY for a variety of communities in our region with similar populations or demographics:

2011-2012 Arrest Rate Per 1000 Residents in Community Protected			
Community	Arrest Rate – Black	Arrest Rate – Non-Black	Ratio
Lower Merion	198.4	29.3	6.8
Haverford	171.7	25.9	6.6
Radnor	225	37.2	6.0
Whitemarsh	307.9	38.0	8.1
Tredyffrin	195.2	37.8	5.2
Abington	225	42.3	5.3
Cheltenham	103.5	19.1	5.4
Plymouth	449.9	56.5	7.9
Upper Dublin	144.5	19.6	7.4

Based on our arrest experience, non-residents are identified and arrested between 80% and 96% of the time for serious crimes. Due to this experience, the relevance of the USA TODAY study on comparison of arrest rates to the local census cannot be substantiated. However, with respect to the study of nationwide data, the disproportionate number of African Americans arrested for serious crimes is a concern. As a progressive police department, we will utilize this knowledge during our ongoing analysis of our policy and training program development with a clear understanding of community concerns and a commitment to focus on our principals of providing professional police services with respect and dignity for all citizens.