

## **Proposal for Establishing a K-9 Unit**

**To:** Chief Burrows, Lt. Curry and the New Castle Town Council

**From:** Ofc J. Alcorta

**Date:** 11/11/2024

**Subject:** Proposal for the Implementation of a K-9 Unit in NCPD

### **Executive Summary**

This proposal outlines the benefits, requirements, and anticipated outcomes of establishing a K-9 Unit within New Castle Police Department. The addition of a K-9 Unit will provide invaluable support in law enforcement operations, community engagement, and the improvement of public safety. A K-9 Unit is a vital resource that will enhance our capability to conduct searches, apprehend suspects, detect drugs, tracking, and more.

### **Background**

Many law enforcement agencies across the nation and within Garfield County have demonstrated the effectiveness of K-9 units in crime prevention and resolution. K-9 units are specifically trained in critical skills, such as scent detection, tracking, and suspect apprehension, which are difficult to replicate with human officers alone. The need for a K-9 Unit in New Castle and the greater Garfield County has become more evident with the increase in specific types of crime and the rising demand for specialized response teams. There have been numerous requests from Law Enforcement Officers across Garfield County for a K-9 Units to assist in various tasks. With fewer K-9's available across the county, the community of New Castle would benefit by having one as well as benefiting its neighbors throughout the Colorado River area from Rifle to Glenwood and the greater Garfield County.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The primary purpose of the K-9 Unit is to enhance the operational capacity of NCPD. Key objectives include:

1. **Improving Officer Safety:** K-9 teams provide critical support in high-risk situations such as drug investigations, search warrants, and apprehension of violent and potentially armed suspects.
2. **Enhancing Crime Prevention and Detection:** K-9s trained in scent detection can identify narcotics, and contraband, offering a powerful tool in combating crime.
3. **Increasing Efficiency in Tracking/Searching Operations:** K-9s trained in search and rescue can locate missing persons/evidence and articles more quickly than human search teams, especially in difficult terrains.

4. **Strengthening Community Relations:** K-9 units are widely appreciated in the community. Through regular demonstrations, community events, and school visits, the K-9 Unit will foster positive relationships between the police and the public.

## **Proposed Structure and Operations**

The NCPD K-9 Unit will initially comprise one highly trained dog, partnered with Ofc Alcorta. The K-9 and Ofc Alcorta will undergo specialized training, including but not limited to:

- **Tracking and Apprehension:** For suspect location and capture
- **Narcotics Detection:** To detect illegal drugs and substances
- **Tracking/Searching:** For locating items/evidence or missing persons or assisting during natural disasters

## **Budget and Funding Requirements**

The annual cost for a K-9 unit with a single dog can vary widely. Annual costs would not begin until the 2026 fiscal year. The budget should include the following.

### **Initial Acquisition and Training:**

- **Cost of the Dog: \$0.** The cost to acquire a trained police dog can range from \$8,000 to \$15,000 or more. Ofc Alcorta is providing the K-9 for NCPD use
- **Initial Handler/K-9 Training:** Training/Certification (Patrol Operations/Case Law course) for both the K-9 and Handler is approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000 (depending on location and course).
- **Vehicle Modifications:** \$7000 to \$9000 (for safe transportation of K-9)(Paid w/2026 budget)

With acquisition and training, the first-year cost can be **\$20,000 to \$35,000 or more.** However, the Town of New Castle is in a unique position to be able to acquire a K-9 at a much-reduced price.

Funding options may include local government grants, state and federal law enforcement assistance programs, and community fundraising initiatives.

### **Estimated Total Annual Cost:**

Taking the following into account, the estimated total annual cost for maintaining a single police K-9 unit typically ranges between **\$3,300 and \$8,500** per year, excluding initial acquisition and training.

### **Ongoing Training:**

- K-9 teams require regular, ongoing training to maintain skills, typically costing between \$1,000 and \$5,000 annually (depending on type of training and any travel involved).

### **Veterinary Care:**

- Routine veterinary care (vaccinations, check-ups, dental care) \$500 to \$1,500 per year.
- *Emergency or specialized care* can add an additional \$1,000 to \$5,000 annually, depending on health issues.

### **Food and Supplies:**

- Quality dog food: \$800 to \$1,000 per year.
- Equipment (leashes, harnesses, muzzles, and toys) \$500 to \$1,000.

### **Insurance:**

- Some departments carry liability insurance for K-9 units, which can add several hundred to a few thousand dollars per year.

### **Housing Stipend:**

- Many departments offer a stipend for handlers to cover the cost of caring for the dog at home, \$500 to \$2,000 per year.

## **Expected Outcomes and Impact**

The establishment of a K-9 Unit in New Castle is expected to result in the following:

- **Increased Crime Resolution:** Enhanced ability to locate suspects and detect illegal substances will lead to more successful investigations.
- **Improved Public Safety:** Faster response times in high-risk situations and better control over public events will contribute to community safety.
- **Enhanced Officer Safety:** Officers will be better supported in dangerous operations with trained K-9 assistance.

## **Risk and Mitigation**

Risks associated with the K-9 Unit include potential injury to K-9s, maintenance costs, and challenges in community perception. We will mitigate these risks through:

- **Regular Training and Health Monitoring:** To ensure the health and readiness of K-9s.
- **Proper Allocation of Funds:** Regular reviews of the budget to maintain optimal operation without overrunning costs.
- **Community Engagement Programs:** Regular demonstrations and engagement efforts to maintain positive public perception and transparency.

## **Conclusion**

A K-9 Unit would significantly enhance the operational capabilities of the New Castle Police Department while fostering community trust and improving public safety. With an investment in this program, our department will be better equipped to respond to the demands of modern policing. Thank you for your continued support and consideration in establishing a K-9 Unit at the New Castle Police Department.

**Respectfully submitted**

Officer Jerry Alcorta