

# STRATEGIC STAFFING

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MAY 2022

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TUMWATER POLICE DEPARTMENT



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## A STRATEGIC PLAN: 2023 - 2028

A well-functioning organization should strive to review core functions periodically in order to evaluate their effectiveness. This report will address one of the most basic components of TPD: staffing. Staffing is critical to providing service to our community as well as preparing the organization for future success.

***“Great vision without great people is irrelevant.”***  
***– Jim Collins, Good to Great***

### STAFFING METHODOLOGY

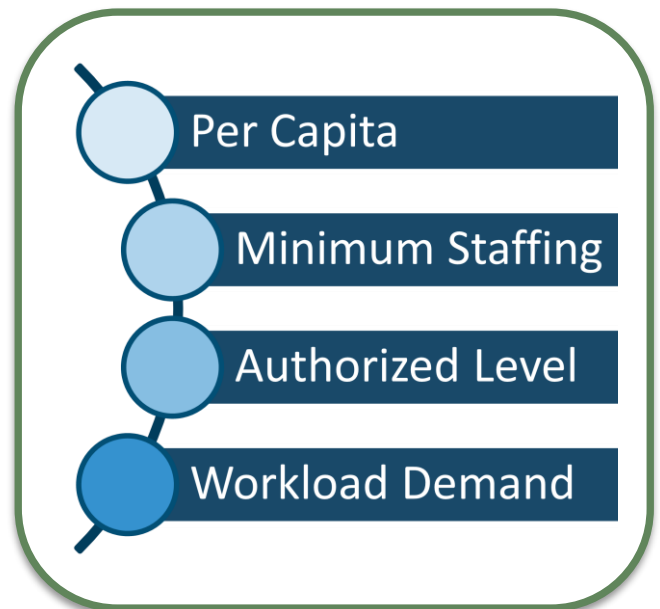
Extant research has demonstrated that there is no singular or standardized benchmark to assess appropriate levels of staffing for police departments and levels are typically determined at the local level based on qualitative assessments, performance objectives, and practical considerations (Wilson & Weiss, 2012). The Department of Justice’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) recognizes four distinct evidence-based approaches to staffing models; the per capita approach, the minimum staffing approach, the authorized level approach, and the workload approach. By examining these four staffing models and assessing the performance objectives of the department it is possible to build a comprehensive staffing model that accurately reflects the needs of both the community and the department, as well as maintaining and potentially exceeding national and local minimum standards for staffing ratios. The practice of community policing is a critical issue for staffing and is the prototypical example of how a more dynamic police environment influences personnel planning.

The per capita approach to staffing models is methodologically simple and easy to interpret but is a biased determination of need as it does not accurately consider population fluidity or long-term growth. Population fluidity is a significant factor in Tumwater with the daytime employment population and nighttime residential population affecting overall population data and growth. In addition, per the current staffing levels and upcoming department retirements it is prudent to factor in the long-term growth of the city and how the police department staffing needs must grow with it in order to maintain

safety and effectiveness. Therefore, pre-emptively addressing staffing needs and anticipated growth can potentially mitigate future staffing shortfalls. However, this approach alone does not take into account the specific needs of the community, including the unique makeup of the city.

National trends show that the average officer to population ratio for cities with a population over 25,000 is 1.8 officers per 1000 residents. While Tumwater's staffing ratio is similar to Lacey and Olympia, it typically reflects a minimum number and not the most efficient or effective staffing approach. In 2021 the official population of Tumwater was 26,050 and the department has authorized 33 commissioned officers, resulting in a ratio of 1.26 but on any given day the active and available number of officers drops as low as 28 due to leave, training, or other factors, resulting in a ratio of 1.07. Coupled with the daytime employment population and annual population growth, the officer to population ratio is below recommended levels and any increases should be commensurate with minimum operating standards and expected growth.

The minimum staffing approach is one of the most common approaches to police department staffing but as the name implies is solely focused on staffing the minimum number of officers to ensure public safety. While there are no objective standards for setting a minimum staffing level departments typically utilize population data, calls for service data, and crime rates as factors to establish the staffing baseline. It is important to note that minimum staffing levels can often be perceived as optimal staffing levels but that is wholly inaccurate when it comes to community policing. When operating under the minimum staffing approach the flexibility of the department is minimized which typically results in more overtime being used. As previously mentioned, management have to actively monitor and counter factors such as vacations, sick leave, and training in order to maintain effectiveness and reduce risk, while ensuring officer safety and appropriate levels of supervision. This approach also requires departments to rely heavily on mutual aid responses from neighboring agencies for high priority calls or large scale events. In recent years TPD has seen both the willingness and the capacity for assistance from neighboring agencies greatly reduced, due to factors including staffing challenges increased risk, and agency risk management. As TPD is focused on public and officer safety, having enough officers available to provide support during interactions is paramount and minimum staffing approaches do not typically allow for the type of coverage that community policing requires.



*Staffing Assessment Models*

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The authorized level approach is typically driven by resource availability and city-management, reflected by an incremental budgeting process. The authorized level is an artificial benchmark which many departments actually drop below due to fluctuations in recruitment, selection, training, and attrition, meaning that ideally departments should staff above the authorized level in order to maintain appropriate staffing, however this is often constrained by budgetary restrictions. Tumwater PD currently has an authorized level of 33 commissioned officers but is operating with 28, and with the impending city growth, officer attrition due to retirement, and both hiring and operational factors, it is recommended that the authorized level be increased at a rate commensurate with relevant factors and as part of a long-term strategic plan.

With only incremental increases in staffing as well as the ‘plus two’ allowance, TPD are consistently operating below authorized level. In order to maintain authorized level allowances must be made to allow for leave, training, and duty requirements, as well as unexpected attrition or increased needs.

The workload approach is a more comprehensive approach to staffing models and is based on demand for service and systematic analyses which account for service-style and agency characteristics. This approach involves complex modelling and a thorough mixed-methodological exploration of the various factors within the appropriate models.

## **CURRENT TPD STAFFING EVALUATION**

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) helped develop a formula for staffing modeling but various components within that formula were based on national averages or assumed figures. The following model is built on the basis of that formula but has been rebuilt using more appropriate data points and using data gathered within TPD, as well as qualitative assessments and triangulation of that data.

Due to the differences in calls for service during the COVID-19 pandemic, historical data (2013-2021) was used as a benchmark and 2022 data (January, February, March) was used to approximate the current trends.

The first step was to determine the number of calls responded to by TPD within the specified period, utilizing calls for service data.

The second step multiplies the total number of calls by the average time for an officer to be involved with that call. There is a “generally accepted” assumption that the average time for an officer to be involved in a call is 45 minutes, but that standard is inherently problematic based on several key factors: The first is that in most metropolitan police departments the majority of officers are not involved in the investigative components of calls and therefore their time spent on calls is substantially lesser. At TPD

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the officers are fully engaged in both the call and the subsequent investigation process resulting in a longer duration at the scene and a more substantive report-writing process afterwards. The second issue present is that data for call duration is only monitored from when the call is received to when it is closed and therefore does not include factors such as report-writing, evidence processes, transport, or logistical issues. To counter this issue, data was collected within TPD and triangulated qualitatively through officers and supervisors to determine an accurate depiction of average time spent on calls, however as the data below illustrates these figures are an average but have been rounded down to establish a core average time as a baseline only. The third issue is that officer coverage when engaging with potential suspects is not factored into the time spent on a specific call; for example if one officer spends an hour at the scene of a shoplifting but has a second officer present with them the entire time then the time spent on that call is therefore two hours as both officers were fully engaged on that call for that time. With each additional officer present, the amount of time spent on that specific call is increased as those officers were present and engaged for public and officer safety under department policy.

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*Workload Approach to Staffing*

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The average call duration, including report time and external factors, ranges from about 15 minutes for a simple phone call with no follow-up, to multiple officers engaged for multiple hours on a single call. To demonstrate this, a simple shoplifting incident which involved the arrest of a single suspect and the presence of only two officers involved a total of 5.5 hours of officer time. The more complex and serious incidents yield increasingly substantive numbers of officers involved and hours devoted. 32% of calls for service involve at least two officers present (ranging from one additional officer to eight additional officers) which acts as a multiplier for time spent on the respective calls. Report writing can range from twenty minutes to several hours depending on the nature of the incident and the complexities of the process, and under specific circumstances each officer involved must write a report.



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Therefore, at the lowest end of the average call duration (68% of calls) if we assume that all of those calls were the same minimum times with no report follow up and call that number X and the other 32% of calls were two officer calls with minimal report writing and complications and we call that Y, then X+Y divided by the total number of calls for service.

Consequently, if we give 68% of all calls for service the minimum possible call duration (such as if they were all phone calls with no report follow up) which based on TPD data is 28 minutes we would apply that value to 68% of the calls for service and assign that value as X. Then if we give the remaining 32% of all calls an average duration based on a lower level incident that involves a single suspect, two officers, simple reports and no complications, and apply that value to 32% of the calls for service and then assign that value as Y. Then add X to Y and divide by the total number of calls for service to determine the average call duration. Based on this formula, the minimum average call duration for 2022 is 80.4 minutes.

The third step involves the application of the 66% proactive time buffer, as previously referenced as being the ideal time ratio for community policing models.

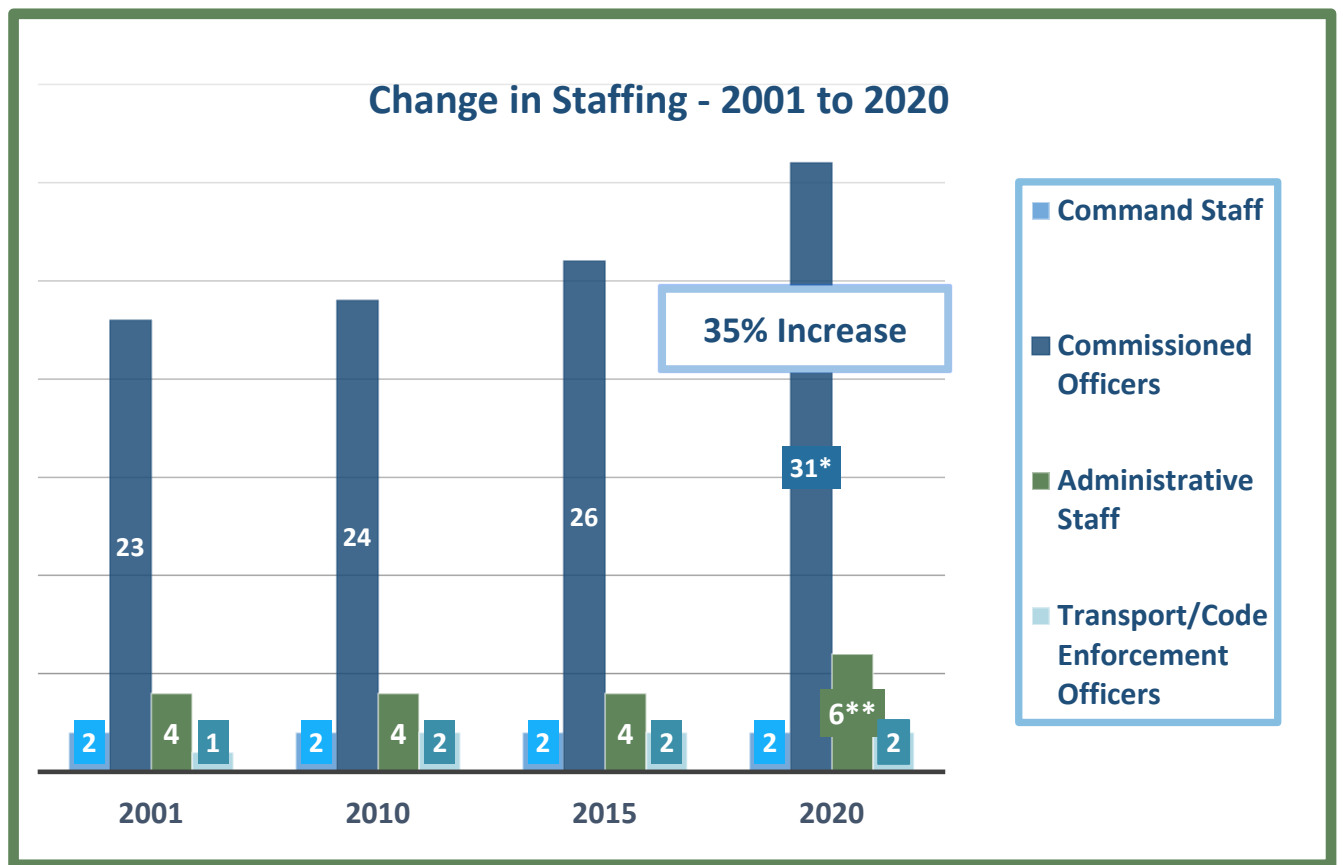
The fourth step is the number of hours necessary to staff one basic officer patrol unit per year, which with a ten hour shift is ten hours multiplied by 365 (days) resulting in 3650 total hours.

The fifth step adjusts the fourth step in order to account for time off, based on department benefits, vacations, leave, and training. The result of this step is a determination of how many officers are required to staff one patrol element, which in this case is 2.2 officers.

The result of this formula is that based on current workload and with a goal of 66% discretionary time for proactive policing, 40.75 officers are needed in the City of Tumwater. However, these averages are based upon the concept that all single officer calls for service were the shortest duration calls and all multiple officer calls for service involved only two officers and minimal engagement and report writing time. This process yields a minimum potential call duration for the department and in actuality the call duration average is substantially higher, which in turn necessitates an even higher number of officers. Additionally, the formula is based on the ideal discretionary time ratio of 66% and currently TPD strives for 60% so this approach is focused on the strategic goal of attaining that ideal 66%.

## **TRENDS IMPACTING STAFFING**

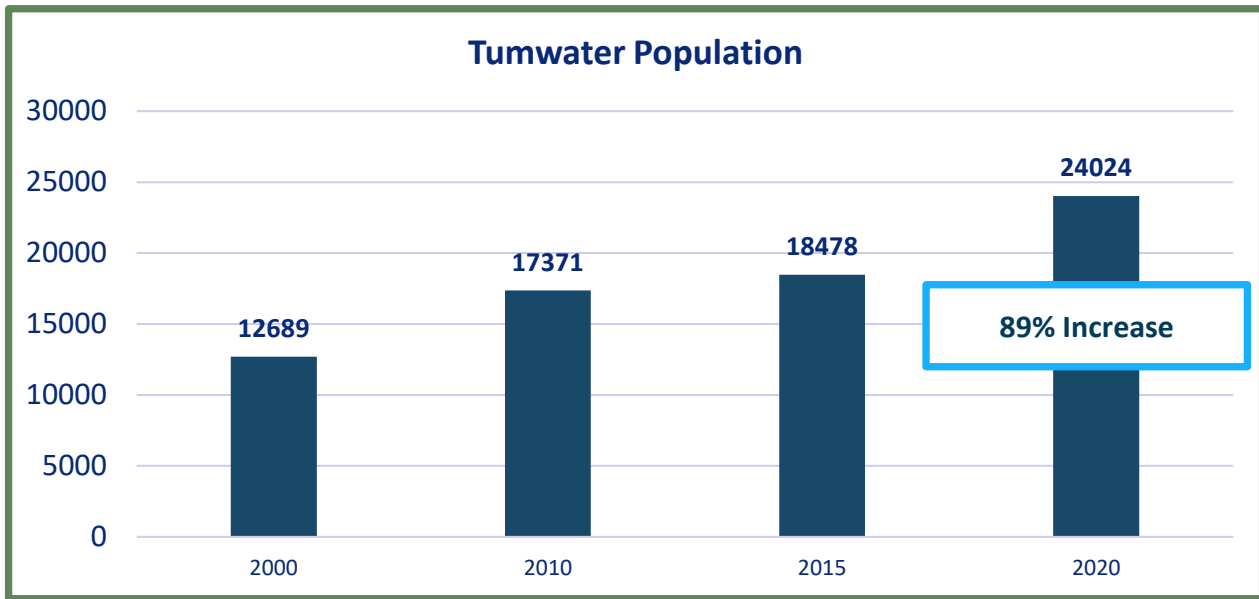
Between 2001 and 2020 TPD staffing levels experienced a 35% increase. During this 20 year time span officers were added due to a large annexation in 2016, as well as the addition of an SRO, paid for by the Tumwater School District. Additionally, TPD became responsible for the Code Enforcement program in 2018, with the addition of a .5 PSS FTE.



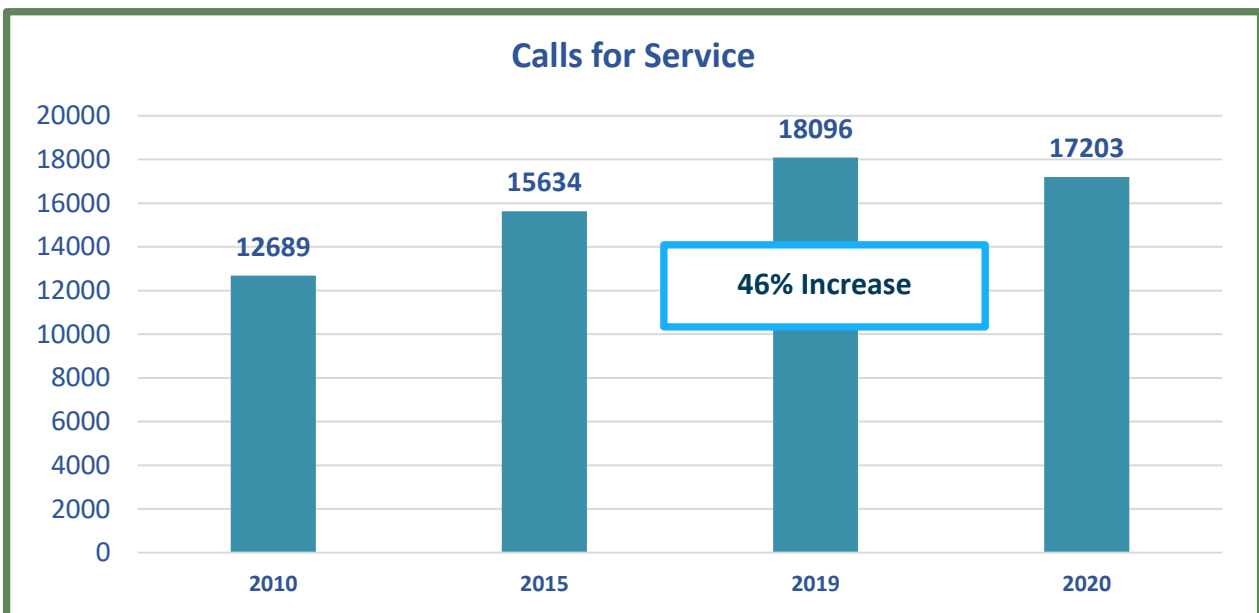
*\*Includes 5 officers for the 2016 annexation and 1 officer for the TSD SRO contract*

*\*\*Includes 1 evidence officer and 1 vacant/frozen PSS1 position.*

Over the same time period, the population of Tumwater increased by nearly 90%. Part of the increase was due to a large annexation in 2016, but the remainder has been growth within the City limits. This does not take into account the significant increase in the retail corridor along Tyee Drive or the influx of Washington State government buildings/employees, both of which draw thousands of visitors to the city each day.



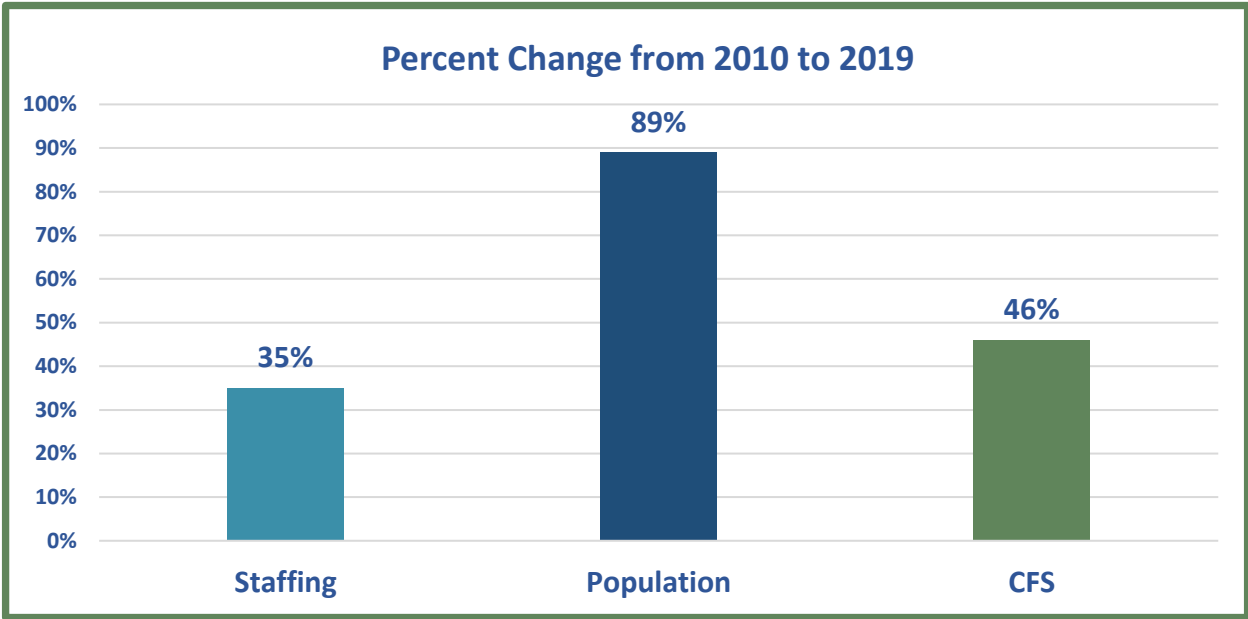
TPD Calls for Service increased 46% over the last 10 years, and current 2022 data reflects this increasing trend.



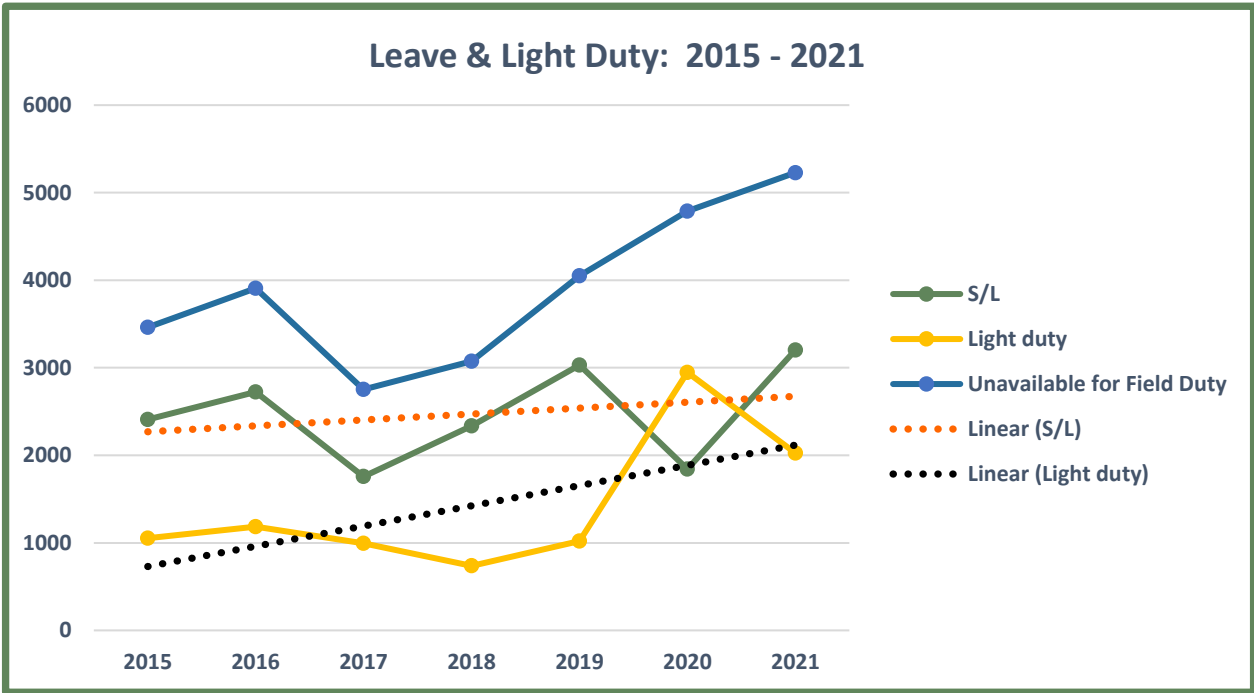
*Calls for Service in 2020 were impacted by the COVID-19 lock-down; 2019 data is more representative.*



As the chart below illustrates, TPD staffing increases are not commensurate with increases in both local population and annual calls for service.



In addition to staffing falling behind growth in population and in calls for service, typical daily absences due to sick leave, annual leave, training, and light duty further erode the number of officers available to staff shifts on any given day.



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Finally, hiring complexities, upcoming retirements, and supervisory considerations compound the current staffing situation. Many senior officers are in key positions within the department and we have seen an increase in time lost due to injury. This significantly impacts our daily operations because of the need to shift junior officers into those roles. We operate more often at minimum staffing when this occurs, reducing the number of officers in the field and straining the available resources needed to provide public and officer safety.

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

This analysis is focused on long-term strategic planning and as such there are several key considerations and recommendations.

The analyses within this report demonstrate that TPD is operating below ideal capacity and that based on current data the department would need a minimum of forty commissioned officers in order to maintain full operational capacity. However, hiring enough suitable candidates to reach that ideal staffing number is both unfeasible and unnecessary in the short term as TPD is currently able to operate with relative effectiveness. The goal is to strive to increase staffing capacity incrementally, inclusive of factors such as the current staffing crisis and competition with other agencies surrounding ideal candidates, as well as the time it takes to hire and train officers and the attrition rate within the department.

The drive to increase officer discretionary time is based on a recommendations from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) which recognizes that the minimum discretionary (proactive) time for officers is 50% but the ideal is 66%. Within TPD, current qualitative estimates place the average discretionary time for officers at around 44%, however the data collection for this estimate cannot account for undocumented time. Further analysis of officer time demands is required to generate a more accurate account of discretionary time. Under the current staffing situation at TPD, the discretionary time goal is 60%, but with a staffing increase in line with the analyses in this report it would be feasible to surpass that 60% goal and reach the ideal percentage of 66%, which would provide the most service to the community through proactive policing practices as opposed to primarily reactive policing.

The success rates of candidates throughout the hiring process (per the impeccable standards that TPD maintains for officers), coupled with officer attrition due to retirement, and the increasing demand for service as well as the increasing city size and population served by the department, result in the necessity to plan appropriately for long-term strategic growth in order to bring the department up to full operational capacity and maintain the high standards of community policing that the department bestows upon the city. This is especially important when considering department retirements; within the next three years TPD is expected to have ten commissioned officers qualify to

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retire, with a further three officers qualifying in the subsequent two years. The extensive process required to get new hires onto the streets as active members of the department further strains the staffing model since the complexities of the hiring process, from initial interviews to field training, have high levels of failure and attrition. As such, an evaluation is currently being conducted within TPD on the overall hiring process to determine factors which could help streamline the hiring of suitable candidates.

Historically we have seen value in bringing on new-hire officers, but we also recognize the considerable time invested in the on-boarding process. The time at which a new hire becomes a functional patrol officer is around the two-year mark and during that two-year training time frame, the new officers are not adding to daily staffing levels.



TPD relies on its first-line patrol supervisors, the sergeants, to fill gaps in minimum staffing. This is a pragmatic practice that makes sense for infrequent, unexpected absences. However, when overall staffing is not sufficient to consistently fill regular shifts, sergeants may be pulled away from their supervision duties at an unacceptable rate.

Supervision, particularly of patrol officers, is a paramount need. TPD has many new, inexperienced officers since the wave of retirements several years ago. At the same time, the recent plethora of legislation regarding police reform has substantially changed the landscape of modern policing. Supervisors not only provide the guidance needed by officers in the field as they navigate the new waters, but are the front-line defense against the risk associated with any failure to follow best practices and regulations in the field. Supervision is important under the best of circumstances to ensure staff have the guidance they need and are performing at the high level the community expects. Staffing levels must be high enough to allow supervisors to actively supervise consistently. These issues combine to create a compounding factor with significant impact on department staffing levels. Senior leadership that is moving towards retirement combined with a two-year onboarding process, demonstrates the need to maintain staffing levels high enough to compensate for fluctuations in the number of officers available to be working in the field. Without the buffer of officers in training or newly trained, the ability for TPD to provide the high quality 24/7 service our community deserves.

An increase in staffing would allow for the three dimensions of community policing to be fully realized as officers would have more discretionary time to allow them to work collaboratively with the community, proactively and systematically identify and solve problems which evaluating responses, and aligning the entire department under the remit of community policing. Practically, this

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would involve more officer coverage for public and officer safety, as well as accountability, and for the department to be appropriately staffed regardless of leave or training factors, maximizing resource usage while ensuring that officers are appropriately supported and that the department is fully prepared for any circumstances. Ultimately, more commissioned officers result in more community policing through a higher percentage of discretionary time and more officers to act as cover during interactions resulting in higher levels of safety for the community and the officers.

Tumwater is a growing city, due to both annexation and population expansion, and therefore it is imperative that the police department staffing is focused on long-term strategic growth not short-term supply and demand as this does not allow for the impact of attrition or hiring processes or daily attendance. In order for TPD officers to effectively operate with appropriate supervision and with the necessitated ratio of discretionary time that allows them to engage in community policing practices, it is crucial that staffing levels increase to account for both the immediate needs and the future goals of the department.

## **STRATEGIC STAFFING**

The Tumwater Police Department has been serving the Tumwater community since 1948. Over that time it has grown from being staffed by a single individual to our current staffing of 41 dedicated people serving our community, 33 commissioned officers and 8 non-commissioned staff. In order to continue the high level of service our community has grown to expect, we must continue to have both the correct complement of staff and the high quality employees we insist upon. With the addition of our Management Analyst in 2022, Dr. Oliver Bowers, we have been able to identify and quantitatively support a staffing model to best serve the Tumwater community. This staffing model allows for high performance and adaptability with an eye towards future community growth and demands for service. Additionally, with Dr. Bowers on staff we have the ability to regularly monitor our staffing and performance and report back to stake holders on outcomes.

TPD has maintained its service to the community over the last 5 years despite considerable growth and increases in the complexity of calls. This model, however, is not sustainable and leaves little room for any variance in staffing levels. Although we have been able to adapt to light duty requests, FMLA needs, leave and training, we are at capacity and would have difficulty adjusting to any future losses.

The staffing plan takes into consideration our current staffing needs, our future staffing, and the constraints we face with hiring and training new officers. In 2017, we were faced with 13 openings for officers due to a large annexation and a flood of retirement. Filling those positions took five years in a less challenging hiring environment than we are currently facing. We learned valuable lessons about the constraints involved when hiring such a large number of positions that we are putting to

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use in our staffing strategy. TPD has notable strengths that we will use to enhance our ability to hire. At the same time, we recognize there will be significant challenges. Maximizing the former will allow us to overcome the latter.

## STRENGTHS

- **A strong culture and service philosophy.** In the recent community survey conducted by the City of Tumwater, the police department received high marks overall including 76% of residents reporting feeling safe in the community and 73.7% reporting overall confidence in TPD.
- **A stable, diverse work force.** We have seen little turn over in the past three years and our command staff is stable, skilled and established.
- **A long-held Department value of investing in employees.** For the past 30+ years, TPD has maintained a core value of developing employees through training, mentorship, and professional development. The value is at the heart of our robust training program and our annual evaluation process. Our field training officer (FTO) program is well established and the officers completing it are performing at high levels early within their careers. We have identified succession planning as one of our department priorities: every supervisor and manager is tasked with developing staff who can replace them.
- **Enhanced supervision model.** In order to quickly and effectively implement the new police reform legislation, we identified a supervisory/leadership model that added supervision which is already paying dividends – our less experienced officers have consistent guidance and the City has a lower level of risk.

## CHALLENGES

- **Retirement of eligible officers.** 30% of our officers (10 officers) are eligible to retire in the next 3 years and by 2027, 43% (13 officers) of our commissioned staff will be retirement eligible. Replacing officers will coincide with the need to grow our overall complement.
- **Reduced candidate pools.** TPD, along with virtually every other law enforcement agency within Washington State, is facing reduced candidate pools, while position vacancies are climbing due to people leaving the law enforcement field and to retirement. Agencies are experiencing attrition at a rate of 30-40%, yet fewer qualified candidates want to enter law enforcement due to perceptions about policing, the difficulty of the jobs, and issues such as schedules and pay.
- **Long hiring and training periods.** Law enforcement has a longer hiring and training process than most professions. From written test to an officer being able to function at a basic independent level on the road is an 18-24 month process. The Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA), the only officer-training institution in Washington, does not have adequate capacity to meet the increasing need for new officers. Once in training, the fail rate is

significant due to the complexities of policing. Additionally, the inability to hire an individual until a vacancy occurs puts us at a significant and constant disadvantage in maintaining and growing our Department.

**STAFFING PLAN**

TPD Command Staff have carefully considered the staffing analysis prepared by our Management Analyst along with the challenges we face in meeting the projected need. We propose a five year plan for increasing our staff complement by 10 officer positions. We will use the first two years of the plan to front-load our upcoming needs and add fewer officers per year in years 3-5.

Adding the majority of the positions in the first two years will give TPD the staffing to weather the hiring process for anticipated retirements and other long-term absences or terminations, while growing the Department’s complement to achieve the workload outcomes identified in this analysis.

