

Watertown Police Dept

To: Finance Committee

From: Chief Dave Brower

Date: 06/19/25

Subject: New Positions Request

Background

History of Administration staffing

For more than a quarter of a century the Administrative staff at the Watertown Police Dept has not increased in personnel size, staying stagnant with a Chief and three administrators (2 captains and a Deputy/Assistant Chief, or 3 captains) and one Administrative Assistant. During this time, the amount of process work that needs to be accomplished administratively has skyrocketed exponentially. Some examples are: Accreditation Documentation, State and Federal Reporting requirements, Internal Affairs reports, Financial Office requirements, Policy Increases, Annual Reports, and many more. This leads to a reality where the administrators are overwhelmed with process work, preventing them from being able to do the work of leadership. When I became Chief, my stated expectation to Mayor McFarland was to be able to meet with each employee for an hour per year, to hear their difficulties and their suggestions for better work product, and engage them in leadership investment. I have been unable to accomplish any of that intention, instead I have been inundated with way more work than I can possibly finish in a 40 hour work week. I estimate that I have averaged 60 or more hours of work per week for the past 1.5 years. I have been able to keep the other Administrators closer to 50 hours, by keeping process things that rightly should be delegated so that the chief can do leadership rather than process. There are other process needs that I regret have not been met to my expectations, including compiling a yearly "Annual Report." We simply do not have the time to accomplish everything I would like to accomplish.

My Growing Understanding of the Administration Staffing Problem

As I began this position, I quickly became overwhelmed with the sheer volume of work, and delegated much of it, until I had more than maxed out the 40-hour work week of each of the Administrators, and they were forced to delegate what they could to their subordinate Sergeants

and Officers. I spoke with Mayor McFarland about this problem, and she told me that she was surprised that no other Police Chief had expressed the need for more staffing, as the Fire Department had done, because surely we could not be accomplishing the same work as was done 25 years ago with the same 4 people. I asked her to give me the first 6 months to be sure that I was truly understanding the problem correctly, and to be sure that some of the problem was not a result of my inexperience and inefficiency at the new position. After a few months it was fully apparent that I needed more administrative staffing, but as the 2025 budget approached, it was decided that it would be a “no increase” budget year, and thus asking for new staffing was going to be denied. The increase of process work has continued to grow during the 2025 year.

For comparison purposes, I also took a look at what other WI Police Departments closest to our size have done with their administrative staffing. Of those four agencies, they average 5 administrators compared to our 4.

Police Officer Staffing History

In the same quarter of a century, we have not increased our patrol officer positions at all, we have instead increased our School Resource Officer positions from 1 to 3, in part because those positions cost us only fifty cents on the dollar, because the School District covers half the cost each year. One of those positions started this year in 2025. In addition, around ten years ago we removed one of our detective positions, from four down to three.

Patrol Officer Staffing Problem

In the past quarter of a century, the number of incidents we handle and the danger of the incidents has grown tremendously, and we are still staffed with minimums of 3 officers on 1st and 3rd shift, and 4 on 2nd Shift (except Friday and Saturday on 3rd shift the minimum is 4). This means we are often forced to respond to multiple dangerous calls, such as domestic abuse situations, with only one officer available, and no backup. We need to increase our minimum patrol staffing to 4 all the time, so that we can respond to more than one dangerous call at a time with two officers. For instance, up until 5 years ago we had never in the history of our department had an Officer Involved shooting, and then in 5 years we had 3 of them, the most dangerous of calls. We were very fortunate that each of those three most dangerous incidents occurred when at least two officers were available, but that was sheer good fortune that our officers had at least one backup officer available. Our officers survived those encounters, but might not have without backup.

Financial Impact

Increase Budget by the indicated amounts in the individual request spreadsheets.

Captain: \$116,272

Administrative Assistant II: \$73,075

2 Officers: \$93,526 x 2

Recommendation

I am recommending an addition of one Captain and one Administrative Assistant II to the Staff. This will mean 20% of each administrator's "process" work load can be given to the new Captain position and to the Administrative Assistant II position, allowing each of us to have 20% opening to our workloads, to be able to invest in the leadership needs of our people.

I am recommending the addition of two patrol officers this year, one for the prior 2025 budget year where it was denied due to a no-increase budget, and one for the 2026 year. If we can add an officer per year for 4 more years, we would then have two extra officers per shift, which would allow us to increase our minimums to 4 at all times, and maintain the necessary staffing to allow officers to use their time off. (We can't deny them the right to use their vacation and time off by declaring that the new minimum staffing is 4, without increasing staffing levels.)

I am preferring the addition of the Captain and the Administrative Assistant II position, if I am forced to rank my requests. The current workload on our Administrative Staffing is not sustainable, burnout is expected. But we also need to increase our patrol staffing and soon return to 4 detectives.

2026 Operational Goals

1. Works to address critical staffing areas
2. Invests in the assessment, strategic planning and maintenance of our police force
3. Maintains a safe and healthy community