

Mayor's Hometown Security Study Committee

Final Report

July 3, 2003

Hometown Security Study Final Committee Report Executive Summary

Providing for the safety and security of all citizens is among the most important functions of government at all levels. In Lincoln we are blessed with a tradition of providing high quality public safety services at a low cost. As we pursue a long term strategy of multi-directional growth, Lincoln's future prosperity and the safety of future generations will be closely tied to our ability to maintain this legacy of high quality, affordable first responder services.

In December 2002, Mayor Don Wesely requested the formation of a community Committee to study the issue of a growing gap between the resources of Lincoln's first responders - Fire, Ambulance and Police and the Emergency Communications Center - and their ability to meet the public safety and emergency services needs of an expanding city with a growing population. The City Council and the County Board supported this request and the Hometown Security Study Committee (HSS) was launched in January 2003. This Committee was formed following the defeat of a proposed \$8 million bond initiative in November 2002 to fund two new fire stations and other improvements.

The Hometown Security Study Committee consisted of individuals agreed to by the Mayor, City Council and County Board. The 15 member Committee reflected a combination of private individuals, elected officials, and city - county department directors. The Committee was chaired by retired Nebraska National Guard Adjutant General Stanley Heng. In the charge from the Mayor, workgroups were identified to focus on specific topics. The Committee launched two workgroups - one focused on Lincoln Fire and Rescue and Emergency Medical Services and the second on the Police Department and the 911 / Emergency Communications Center. These workgroups included individuals agreed to by the Mayor, City Council and County Board. The Committee met every other week for four months, starting in February and concluding in June 2003, while the workgroups met on a weekly basis from March through May.

Summary of Recommendations

Following four months of discussions and voting, thirty recommendations were approved by the Committee. These recommendations reflected a general consensus among the Committee that Lincoln was indeed facing a public safety gap. While most recommendations were directly related to first responder (Police, Fire, Emergency Medical, 911 Center) capabilities and demand for services, several issues emerged as guiding themes. These general recommendations were:

- First responder services are a top priority of local government that must be reflected in City budgets.
 - Elected officials need to provide united leadership to conduct an informed outreach to the community about the importance of first responder services.
 - There is a need for broad based community outreach and dialogue to gain a better understanding of community attitudes regarding first responder services.
- The Committee and workgroups examined specific capabilities and the demand for the

core services provided by Lincoln's first responders. From these discussions the following recommendations were approved.

For the **Lincoln Fire and Rescue Department** the Committee recommended:

- Meet future fire and emergency service needs by building multi-purpose "Public safety facilities" that includes space for Police, 911 and, where possible, other non-emergency community services.
- Strive to utilize industry standards to guide decision making regarding staffing levels.
- Strive to meet a goal of a four minute response time to a citizen's emergency.
- Establish a ten year goal to achieve a ratio of 1.3 fire fighters per 1,000 residents and consider coordinating all fire inspection, public education and fire prevention staff within the Lincoln Fire and Rescue department.
- Consider stationing some ambulances on the periphery of the city to improve county response times while maintaining response times in Lincoln.

In a related recommendation, the Committee found that the County Board should fund an integrated communications system linking all county emergency service providers.

For the **911 / Emergency Communications Center** the Committee recommended:

- Upgrade technology to maintain and improve efficiency and handle an increasing volume of calls.
- Fund one additional call station to serve increasing demand.
- Explore increasing the 911 telephone line surcharge from its current \$.50 to \$1.00 to provide funds for additional staff needed to respond to call volume.
- Explore other funding options (cell phone surcharge, tower rental) as alternatives to increased surcharge.
- Explore ways to decrease the volume of non-emergency calls to the 911 center.

For the **Police Department** the Committee recommended:

- Increase staff to enhance quality of service. Establish a ten year goal of 1.5 officers per 1,000 residents was recommended; and maintain a ratio of one civilian support position for every three police officers.
- Review current assignments to ensure that officers are assigned to highest priority areas.
- Explore the possibility of using civilian staff to reduce the burden on officers and enable management to redeploy officers to highest priority areas.
- Continue the practice of developing neighborhood substations in priority areas and develop precinct substations in fast growing periphery areas.

In summary, the Hometown Security Study Committee's recommendations acknowledge there is an emergency services gap in Lincoln and Lancaster County that will continue to grow. The Committee predicts the gap will soon reach a point that it jeopardizes our first responder's ability to respond in a timely manner to requests for emergency services unless the community takes steps to increase the staff and technological sophistication of existing first responders.

I. Overview

Charge from the Mayor¹

The focus of the Committee and workgroups was guided by the charge from Mayor Wesely, who emphasized that Lincoln has historically placed a high priority on maintaining the safety of our community. The goal of the Committee's work was to develop a "realistic comprehensive plan for the City of Lincoln to deliver public safety services to protect the people of Lincoln as the City grows." In identifying these goals, maintenance of existing services and the infrastructure for those services was given primary consideration, followed by the need for expanded services as the City's population grows. The 2025 City-County Comprehensive Plan would serve as the guide for assuming the future rate of population growth, the direction of growth, and the phasing of growth. The Committee's priority was to review the needs of police and fire protection and ambulance service. The Mayor recommended that a comprehensive study should include an examination of the following:

- The current personnel numbers of the Fire, Police and the 911 Center.
- The workload of the Police, Fire and 911 Center.
- The growth of the number of 911 dispatches for Police and Fire.
- Whether there is a need to increase the resources of the Police, Fire and 911.
- Whether there are alternative ways to meet the growing demand for Police, Fire and 911 services without adding personnel.
- The cost of adding to the Police, Fire and 911 Center and discuss how increasing resources might be financed.
- The current equipment capabilities and future needs.

The Committee was asked to draft a plan for the city to consider for the next 6 years and a longer range strategy. Noting that it was important that the community discuss this plan, Mayor Wesely asked that the overall work be completed no later than June 1, 2003, to ensure the recommendations of this effort could be considered during the City of Lincoln's deliberations of the Fiscal Year 2003-2004 budget.

Committee / Workgroup Members

The fifteen members of the Hometown Security Study Committee were agreed to by the Mayor, City Council and County Board. The Committee included a combination of elected officials, city - county department directors and private individuals. The Committee subsequently formed two workgroups - one focused on Lincoln Fire and Rescue and Emergency Management Services and the other on the Police Department and the 911 / Emergency Communications Center. As was the case with the full Committee, these workgroups included individuals agreed to by the Mayor, City Council and County Board. Over a four month period, starting in February and concluding in June 2003, the Committee met a total of 12 times, while

¹The Charge from the Mayor to the Committee and Outline of Workgroup Goals are included in the appendix.

the workgroups met on a weekly basis beginning in March and concluding in May.²

The Hometown Security Study (HSS) Committee members were:

Stanley Heng, Adjutant General Nebraska National Guard (retired), Committee Chair
Doug Ahlberg, director, Lincoln / Lancaster County Emergency Management Center
Carol Brown, chairwoman, Neighborhood Roundtable
Tom Casady, chief, Lincoln Police Department
Bruce Dart, director, Lincoln Health Department
Jeff Fortenberry, former member, Lincoln City Council
Jim Geist, retired chairman, Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph
Larry Hudkins, member, Lancaster County Board of Commissioners
Don Marti, public safety manager, Lincoln Airport
Annette McRoy, member, Lincoln City Council
Major Guy Moon, anti-terrorism officer, Nebraska Army National Guard
Julie Righter, communications coordinator, Lincoln / Lancaster County 911 Emergency
Oscar Rios Pohirieth, bilingual liason, Lincoln Public Schools
Michael Spadt, chief, Lincoln Fire and Rescue Department
Ken Svoboda, member, Lincoln City Council ** NOTE: Craig Madsen, owner
RCMadsen Consultants, withdrew from the Committee because of a work-related
relocation.

Each workgroup consisted of a combination of Committee members and other representatives.

The Police / 911 workgroup members were:

Members	Affiliation
Carol Brown	HSS Committee (co-chair)
Don Marti	HSS Committee (co-chair)
Jennifer Brinkman	East Campus Neighborhood Association
Tom Casady	HSS Committee
Annette McRoy	HSS Committee
Major Guy Moon	HSS Committee
Oscar Rios Pohirieth	HSS Committee
Julie Righter	HSS Committee
Ed Sheridan	Lincoln Police Union

The Fire / EMS workgroup members were:

²A meeting protocols document which established the rules for Committee and workgroup meetings is included in the Appendix.

Member	Affiliation
Doug Ahlberg (co-chair)	HSS Committee
Ken Svoboda (co-chair)	HSS Committee
Larry Hudkins	HSS Committee
Mike Spadt	HSS Committee
Wally Barnett	Former State Fire Marshall/ State Senator
Hobart Boswell	Retired fire chief (Foxboro, MA)
Barbara Layman	Hawley Area Neighborhood Association
Bill Mason	Retired fire insurance specialist
Dr. Dale Michels	EMS Inc. Board
Mark Munger	Lincoln Fire Union
Rollin Schneider	Retired UNL Professor
Paul Haith	Former Nebraska EMS regulation / licensing

II. Background conditions

During the course of the Committee and workgroup discussions, several key factors emerged as the core principles. Foremost among these principles was the broad recognition that first responder services are a vital function of local government. The well being and security of all citizens is a primary function - for several of the members the most important function - of local government. There was also a recognition of the heightened concern that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the ongoing war on terrorism places new, unforeseen challenges for local government.

Early in Committee deliberations, participants noted that Lincoln has a long tradition of receiving value for the cost of providing first responder services. The Lincoln Police Department has maintained a high level of service while having one of the smallest forces, as a percentage of total population, in the nation. Similarly, over the last decade, the Lincoln Fire and Rescue Department has maintained rapid response times to emergency situations (and has provided citizens with a level of coverage that enables them to benefit from low insurance rates) with essentially the same staff as in 1990.³ There was broad agreement that the low per capita cost of public safety services must be maintained in the current environment of competing demands for scarce public resources. The current tighter fiscal climate is complicated by increased demand for first responder services generated by the growth in Lincoln / Lancaster County during the last ten years.

Future Growth Projections

As part of the overview to the current status of first responders, both the full HSS Committee and the Fire Workgroup asked the Planning Department for an overview on the Comprehensive Plan for 2025 Lincoln and Lancaster County. This overview provided information about population projections, future growth areas and a review of services provided by the Fire, Police and EMS departments. These reports showed that the county population for

³ During this period, the Fire Department staff grew by 1.2 full time employee. For a full break down of public safety staff, see the staffing table in the appendix.

the last census was 250,000, with 90% or 225,000 in the city of Lincoln. The 2025 Comprehensive Plan's 2025 projected population for Lancaster County will grow to 363,000 and 328,000 for the city of Lincoln, for an annual population growth rate of 1.5%. Currently the city is approximately 80 square miles. By the year 2025 it is projected that 40 additional square miles will be added to Lincoln, with new growth in all directions.⁴ The need for future fire stations and police substations to serve these new growth areas is discussed in the Comprehensive Plan. The Committee noted that this projected growth will challenge our ability to continue providing all citizens with current standards of first responder services. During both HSS Committee and workgroup meetings participants expressed concern that the demand for expanded first responder services caused by growth have not been adequately addressed.

City Budget

The Committee asked the Finance Department to provide information about how the needs of first responder service providers are addressed in the city's budget process. A review of past budgets indicated that public safety has been and continues to be a top budget priority of local government. During the past 13 years, the city has grown in population by 19% and in geographic area by 25.2%. Growth of overall city staff during this same period was 8.6%. Within this 8.6% growth, however, there has only been a 1.9% increase in the number of civilian employees other than public safety employees (Fire, Police, 911). During this period, total public safety employees have increased 22.1%, and Police Department employees have increased 28.1%, indicating this area to have been a top priority for elected officials.⁵ The source for funding for public safety services is almost exclusively general revenue funds.⁶ About 70% of the tax budget is related to personnel. Public safety employees account for 45% of all tax supported public employees.

Time period

This summary report is the result of a four-month process. While this was not enough time to investigate every topic associated with Lincoln's hometown security, it provided an opportunity to identify and explore pressing issues and develop recommendations that could be considered in conjunction with the development of Lincoln's 2003-04 fiscal budget. While the HSS Committee and workgroups examined department budgets, the Committee did not explore in great depth a range of financial options available to address increased demand for services. Similarly, the Committee and workgroups did not attempt to analyze the managerial practices of the Police, Fire and Emergency Communications. During the deliberations, Committee and

⁴A map of Comprehensive Plan growth projections is included in the Appendix.

⁵A table comparing the growth in public safety staff versus other city employees is included in the Appendix.

⁶In addition to General Fund revenues, City agencies receive some Federal grants to support first responder activities. For example, the Police department currently has Federal grants that would provide partial funding to support hiring 12 new police officers. Such grant programs are aggressively pursued both by individual departments and by the Emergency Management department on behalf of all Lincoln-Lancaster County first responders.

workgroup members noted that these recommendations should be viewed as a starting point for continuing dialogue about the value residents place on first responder services and ways we can continue providing high quality, low cost services. Two members of the Fire / EMS workgroup, for example, provided proposals, including various cost savings and growth controlling ideas, that the workgroup discussed but did not incorporate into comprehensive recommendations. Those issues are included in the appendix to this report.

Threat of Terrorism

The HSS Committee was launched amid the climate of heightened concern about domestic security that emerged following the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 and ensuing concerns about terrorist attacks utilizing Weapons of Mass Destruction. The Committee and workgroup meetings occurred during the war in Iraq and frequent changes in the national terrorism alert. These conditions, and the demands that an uncertain, potentially more dangerous international scene may place additional demands on local first responder providers and additional costs on the city, were fundamental considerations of the Committee.

The HSS Committee asked the Mayor to clarify whether or not they were to examine all agencies involved in both local and national security issues or whether their charge was to focus on the status of local Police, Fire and 911 Center services. The Mayor noted that the focus of this Committee's work would be to review the local workload and growing service demands. During early meetings, the Committee held a series of briefings to review the status of local Departments / agencies responsible for coordinating responses to emergency situations including terrorist and Weapons of Mass Destruction events:

- Lincoln / Lancaster County Emergency Management Services
- Nebraska Emergency Management Agency
- Nebraska National Guard

These reviews suggested that Nebraska, and in particular Lincoln-Lancaster County, appeared to be ahead of other states and local governments in community-wide planning for emergency situations. In addition the Committee found that Lincoln / Lancaster County Emergency Management Services was actively and successfully pursuing Federal grant opportunities to further enhance the capabilities of all municipal first responders.⁷

The presentations also led to a general understanding that influenced subsequent Committee meetings – that the vast majority of the responsibility for enhancing local first responder capabilities will fall on local government resources. Despite the creation of a new Federal agency to direct Homeland Security, efforts to enhance domestic preparedness against acts of terrorism will fall on local first responders funded largely by local resources. Questions about staffing levels, technology and the location of facilities are inherently local decisions that will require local deliberations and ultimately local support.

⁷See the Attachments for a summary of these activities.

Public Outreach

During several early meetings, Committee members discussed the need to gain a better understanding of what citizens expect from first responder providers. While noting that many of the decisions about optimal staffing levels are based on perceptions of community demand for services, no comprehensive survey research was conducted to measure what community members expect from Lincoln's emergency service providers. As an alternative the Fire and Police Departments and the 911 Center utilize consumer satisfaction surveys to determine community support for services.

The Committee discussed the benefits of conducting a community-wide survey and public campaign to gain a better understanding of community expectations. While the Committee felt this would provide useful insight, the Committee concluded that it would take more time than they had available. In place of broad outreach Committee members, as representatives of various segments of the community, would serve as barometers of community attitudes. Committee members suggested techniques, such as telephone surveys, presentations at neighborhood organizations, and targeted outreach to non-English speakers, to get input from a broader array of individuals.

III. Recommendations

The following thirty recommendations were approved by the Hometown Security Study Committee. These issues were first identified and discussed at the workgroup level. Only when recommendations had been discussed and approved by a majority vote of the workgroups, were they forwarded to the full committee for consideration. At Committee meetings, workgroup chairpersons presented recommendations that were then deliberated by the full HSS Committee. The thirty recommendations presented here were approved by a majority vote of the Committee after lengthy discussion. Some issues raised during the workgroup and committee meetings that did not receive a majority vote by the workgroup committee were not reflected in these final recommendations. These are included in the appendices to this report as minority reports for future consideration.

The recommendations regarding the all important issue of department staffing levels reflect the Committee's desire to balance the dual commitment to maintaining both the high quality of first responder services equally available to all Lincoln residents and our tradition of low cost services. The increased staffing levels advocated in the recommendations that follow reflect the Committee's support for increasing total staffing to meet our growing community's demands for services, while maintaining the relatively small size of the staff of our first responders departments. The recommended staffing ratios that emerge from these deliberations would keep both Lincoln's Fire and Rescue and Police Department in the bottom third of peer group comparisons of staff sizes divided by total population. The personnel staffing recommendations were not unanimous, and alternative rationales are summarized in the minority reports that follow the approved recommendations.

General Recommendations of the Mayor’s Hometown Security Study Committee

Recommendation #1: The Hometown Security Study Committee strongly recommends that the City Council and the Mayor carefully examine current budget priorities to ensure that a top responsibility of our local government, protecting the lives and well being of all Lincoln’s citizens, is identified as a first priority in this and future city budgets.

Recommendation #2: The Hometown Security Study Committee challenges elected officials to provide the united leadership necessary to engage the community in a broad based, multi-faceted dialogue about the need to provide the adequate, stable sources of funding (both from the general fund budget and general obligation bonds) our first responders require to meet the expectations of our community.

Recommendation #3: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the City explore new and more effective ways to educate the community about the emergency / public safety services it currently provides, specifically those provided by the Fire and Rescue Department (including EMS services), the Police Department and the 911 Emergency Communications Center and their future needs and challenges.

These preceding recommendations provide context for the department specific recommendations that follow.

Fire / EMS Recommendations

Recommendation #1: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the City co-locate Fire, Police and 911 facilities in multipurpose “public safety facilities.” Whenever possible, additional community service space (such as health clinics) should be included in the design of these buildings to provide greater efficiency in the overall use of city funds.

Recommendation #2: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that Lincoln Fire and Rescue should utilize industry standards, such as National Fire Prevention Association-NFPA when making decisions regarding service levels.

Recommendation #3: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that within City limits, Lincoln Fire and Rescue should set a goal of a four-minute response time to a citizen’s emergency.

Recommendation #4: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that Lincoln Fire and Rescue should establish a 10-year goal of achieving a ratio of 1.3 firefighters per 1000 residents.

Recommendation #5: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that Lincoln Fire and Rescue services consider assuming administrative control over all fire inspection, public education and fire prevention staff that are currently coordinated in the

Department of Building and Safety.

Recommendation #6: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the City plan during its budget process to meet the Capital Outlay and Capital Improvement needs identified in the Lincoln Fire and Rescue Project Summary 2003.

Recommendation #7: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the County Board should fund an interoperable communication system for all emergency systems within Lancaster County with consideration of interoperability with other jurisdictions.

Recommendation #8: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that Lincoln Fire and Rescue consider stationing ambulances on the periphery of the city to improve response times to the county while maintaining response times in the city.

911 Emergency Communications Center Recommendations

Recommendation #1: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends the City raise the line surcharge by \$.50 to the legal limit of \$1. It was estimated that this increase in the user fee would generate an additional \$750,000 per year for the 911 Center.

Recommendation #1a: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that if the City approves recommendation #1, the additional surcharge be used to enhance the community's emergency communications capabilities (with the 911 Center having first priority), not to decrease the amount of General Fund revenue allocated for these uses. Uses of these funds should be planned for and reviewed annually.

Recommendation #2: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the City provide funding to allow the 911 Center to hire five additional staff members necessary to operate an additional call station.

Recommendation #3: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that in both years two and three, an additional two staff members be brought on to the 911 Center staff. With the estimated \$53,000 cost per staff person, this would add an additional \$106,000 per year. At the end of this three year cycle, the annual cost of the additional 9 staff members recommended would total approximately \$477,000.

Recommendation #4: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that additional 911 Center staff positions are identified and supported at a rate reflecting the community's overall population growth and the volume of emergency service calls. At a minimum level, current growth projections would necessitate hiring an additional 911 Center operator every three years. This would necessitate budgeting for 1/3 of a position, or \$17,667 each year for a new hire.

Recommendation # 5: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the City examine all possible ways to generate additional revenues for the 911 Center, including opportunities to generate additional revenue from existing communications towers and renegotiating agreements to provide revenue generating opportunities through contracts on the Jensen Park communications tower.

Recommendation #6: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the City investigate legislative options to secure a portion of cellular phone user fees to meet the needs of Lincoln's Emergency Communications Center.

Recommendation #7: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that any revenue generated under Recommendation #6 and Recommendation #7 or any revenue generated from other sources as yet unidentified be used to offset the land line surcharge proposed in Recommendation #1.

Recommendation #8: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the City set up a replacement fund to finance future mobile communications needs.

Recommendation #9: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the Emergency Communications Center Director continue to explore possibilities of relieving the 911 system of non-emergency calls such as a public education campaign in conjunction with the Health Department.

Police Department

Overall Staffing Levels

Recommendation # 1: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the Police Department strive to reach a staffing level of 1.5 officers for every 1,000 residents over the next decade.

Recommendation #2: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the Police Department utilize Federal grants to support hiring 12 new officers in the 2003-04 fiscal year as a first step toward reaching this goal.

Use of Civilian Support Staff

Recommendation # 3: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the Police Department strive to maintain its current 3:1 officer to civilian staff ratio.

Recommendation # 4: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the Police Department explore and make use of additional civilian support staff (specifically Public Service Officers in response to incidents that do not require the services of a sworn Police Officer) where possible and to do so at its discretion.

Recommendation # 5: The Hometown Security Study Committee recognizes that Federal grant opportunities exist to support the hiring of 12 new officers in fiscal year 2003-04, and strongly recommends the City take advantage of this opportunity to add much needed officers to the force. Because of this one-time opportunity, the workgroup understands that it will be necessary to delay hiring the additional civilian support staff needed to support these new officers by a year. The Police / 911 workgroup supports this decision but recommends that these civilian support staff positions are made a priority in the following year's budget request.

School Resource Officer Program

Recommendation # 6: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the Police Department and Lincoln Public Schools extend the current cost sharing arrangement that currently finances School Resource Officers (SROs) in the middle and high school levels (LPS reimburses LPD \$32,612.44 for each school resource officer in the high and middle schools) to cover the cost of the five police officers assigned as SROs in the elementary schools. This would result in LPS reimbursing LPD \$163,062 for five SROs.

Recommendation #7: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that if LPS is unwilling to extend this cost sharing arrangement to include the elementary SROs, that the Police Department redeploy these officers to other, higher priority areas.

Use of Police Substations

Recommendation # 8: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the City continue the practice of developing Neighborhood / Beat Substations in targeted, high priority areas where such stations would enhance the Department's effectiveness and increase visibility. Wherever possible, develop Neighborhood / Beat substations in conjunction with the development of other public buildings, such as schools, fire stations, recreation centers and libraries.

Recommendation #9: The Hometown Security Study Committee recommends that the City develop one or more additional District Substations that allow the department to better respond to the needs of our growing community. District / Team Substations also provide the Police Department with backup office capacity for core administrative functions. Whenever possible, the Police Department should explore the feasibility of developing new District / Team substations in conjunction with new Fire Department or 911 Center facilities. Priority should be given to providing District / Team Substations in the fast growing parts of our City.