



AMHERST TOWN COUNCIL

RFD#

Date:

TO: Mayor Kogon and Members of Amherst Town Council

SUBMITTED BY: Dwayne Pike – Chief of Police

DATE: April 5, 2023

SUBJECT: **MCU/Crime Prevention Staffing – Operational Budget 2023/24**

ORIGIN: Operational Demands.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY: Sec 65 Authorized municipal expenditures 65A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if (a) the expenditure is included in the municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the municipality.

RECOMMENDATION: That council approve of additional positions for staffing in the Major Crime Unit and in Crime Prevention by adding 1 additional police position to the Amherst Police Department and permanently adding the civilian Crime Prevention position (Option 4).

BACKGROUND: The Major Crime Unit has been experiencing many difficulties in relation to the workload and expectations placed on the members assigned to this unit. This had been noted in many of the Monthly Police reports to both council and the Amherst Board of Police Commissioners. The APD Major Crime Unit is responsible for the complex, sensitive and timely files and investigations that only a plain clothes/dayshift unit can address. Adequate resources are required to meet the demand & expectations placed this unit and to avoid the constant re-prioritizing of work due to incoming priority files or other priority work. Many of the deadlines relating to investigations and court are governed by case law associated to timelines, techniques and protocols that we must abide by. As a result, we have often temporarily re-assigned platoon members to work with the MCU members in attempts to keep on top of our responsibilities.

DISCUSSION: Since 2014, the Amherst Police Department, has lost 4 full-time positions. These include:

1. CISNS (Criminal Intelligence Service Nova Scotia) – 1 position paid for completely by the province. This occurred in 2014.
2. 2 Full-time uniform 'flex' positions: These 2 positions enabled us to avoid overtime and schedule extra members for busy times or scheduled events. These positions were dissolved to pay for the new police building and were removed sometime in mid-2014
3. Major Crime Constable: this position was cut as a result of budget cuts in 2016.

Using information from 2021 Stats Canada releases, we can compare Amherst Police with similar size departments in Nova Scotia, most notably Truro, New Glasgow, & Bridgewater.



Amherst Police has the lowest '*police officer to population*' ratio of 251.7. Truro, New Glasgow and Bridgewater all have ratios of 278.3, 302.9 and 278.3 respectively. In 2021, APD members responded to a total of 1,374 criminal incidents. New Glasgow responded to 1,598. Truro and Bridgewater responded to 946 and 667 respectively. Taking into consideration our population, Amherst had the highest incident rate of 14,116.9. In 2021, Amherst had a crime severity index of 124.69. this compares to New Glasgow at 125.35, Truro at 90.22 and Bridgewater at 67.10. In 2022, our monthly occurrence numbers topped previous years and set several new records.

In short, Amherst is one of the lowest staffing, but is one of the busier municipal departments in Nova Scotia. This is very true for our Major Crime Unit which is backlogged with many investigation/files/complaints that have not been worked on for some time and require multiple warrants, interviews and review of hundreds of documents relating to warrant results to organize and prepare crown reports and identify concerns and areas of further investigation. Such files routinely include sexual assaults, child pornography, complex and high-loss frauds, suspicious deaths, and other serious matters.

The Major Crime Unit, by nature of the files and work they are responsible have been traditionally assigned many other responsibilities. Many of these relate to quality assurance, reviewing, reporting, exhibit maintenance, audits, oversight, liaison with other units/agencies/departments and other required police duties. With the elimination of the second MCU position in July of 2016, many of these quality assurance items went to the wayside or were re-assigned to someone else. Assigning many of these tasks to a platoon member was not an option because of the nature of shiftwork.

The workload for MCU has continued to change drastically, in part because of the changes in technology and in part due to expectations of the courts and crowns in regards to the amount and type of information required in a Crown Package for prosecution. This has resulted in the resource crisis that we are facing in our investigative section.

As you are aware, the current situation has 2 people in MCU with the Crime Prevention position being filled by a civilian. The second MCU position was supposed to dedicate 50% of their time to drug enforcement, which again due to priority MCU files, has been extremely difficult and has not been achieved. This was approved for a period of 2 years which is due to expire in August/September 2023 at which time the expectation is that the second position in MCU would return to a uniformed Crime Prevention Officer.

Respectfully, regardless of the decision of council, it is not operationally viable or possible to revert back to a 1-person Major Crime Unit or to operate with any less than three in this investigative unit. Anything below this staffing level will not be effective or provide the resources to address our responsibilities. Doing so will require regular assistance and re-assignments from other sections to adequately and appropriately conduct investigations and cover responsibilities. Inevitably, this would also result in extra overtime or part-time costs to ensure adequate coverage.

There are 5 options available, with option # 4 being the recommended option:

OPTION #1 (CURRENT SITUTATION/STATUS QUO)

Major Crime Unit

- 1 full time Corporal assigned
- 1 full time Constable assigned until end of Crime Prevention Contract (September 2023)

Crime Prevention

- 1 full time Civilian Crime Prevention Coordinator (until September 2023)
- 1 full time Uniformed Crime Prevention Officer (resumes in September 2023)

Costs: Status Quo. No extra costs.

Remarks: Not recommended. This option is not viable. In September 2023, the 'Crime Prevention Officer' would be utilized for MCU and crime prevention programs would be shelved completely or downsized.

OPTION #2

Major Crime Unit

- 1 full time Corporal assigned permanently
- 1 full time Constable assigned permanently

Crime Prevention

- 1 full time Civilian Crime Prevention Coordinator assigned permanently

Cost Estimate: Annual costs associated to the Civilian Crime Prevention position - **\$75,000** annually

Remarks: Not recommended. This provides MCU with permanent 2 positions, which is the current status (although temporary) and either extends or makes the civilian crime prevention position permanent. With this level of resourcing, we are in a constant crisis, reviewing priorities and files and delaying investigations on a regular basis.

OPTION #3

Major Crime Unit

- 1 full time Corporal assigned permanently
- 1 full time Constable assigned permanently
- ½ full time Constable assigned Permanently

Crime Prevention

- ½ full time Constable as Crime Prevention Officer assigned permanently

Costs: Annual costs associated to addition of a full-time member - **\$128,000** annually

Remarks: Not recommended. This provides MCU with three staff to work with, but the third member would also be responsible for Crime Prevention duties, which can be affected by the workload and priorities in MCU. It would likely result in crime prevention programs being shelved completely or downsized considerably.

Adding an additional member to our department brings us closer in line with other municipal departments whose authorized strength (rate per 100,000): 261.3 as compared to 278.3, 278.3 and 302.9

OPTION #4

Major Crime Unit

- 1 full time Corporal assigned permanently
- 2 full time Constables assigned permanently

Crime Prevention

- 1 full time Civilian Crime Prevention Coordinator assigned permanently

Costs: Annual costs associated to adding a full-time police position while keeping the Civilian Crime Prevention position - \$128,000 + \$75,000 = **\$203,000** annually

Remarks: Recommended. This provides MCU with three staff to work with permanently and should enable the unit to function as it was originally meant to.

The Crime prevention coordinator in this option is a civilian position. As a result, and as expected, there are limits on their job duties/description and they cannot actively investigate criminal offenses, back up other members or be used in a police operation. The advantage of having a civilian crime prevention position is solely related to cost.

Adding an additional member to our department brings us closer in line with other municipal departments whose authorized strength (rate per 100,000): 261.3 as compared to 278.3, 278.3 and 302.9

OPTION #5

Major Crime Unit

- 1 full time Corporal assigned permanently
- 2 full time Constables assigned permanently

Crime Prevention

- 1 full-time Crime Prevention Officer (uniform) assigned permanently

Costs: Annual costs associated to the addition of 2 full time police officers. 1 extra for MCU (for three total) and one for a Crime Prevention Officer - \$128,000 + \$128,000 = **\$256,000** annually

Remarks: Preferred, but not recommended. While this is the preferred option, it is not recommended currently as a result of budget projections and discussions with the CAO and senior management of the Town.

This option would provide MCU with three staff to work with permanently and should enable the unit to function as it was originally meant to:

The Crime Prevention Officer would be a sworn uniform position with no limits as they can still respond to any call as a fully-trained operational police officer. They can actively investigate criminal offenses, back up other members or be used in any police operation. It has many advantages over the use of a civilian with the exception of cost.

Adding 2 members to our department would bring us closer in line with other municipal departments whose authorized strength (rate per 100,000): 271.9 as compared to 278.3, 278.3 and 302.9

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: \$203,000 from the 2023/2024 Operational Budget.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPLICATIONS: There are no social justice implications to this decision

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS: No environmental implications

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: No Community engagement required

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Choose another option for MCU/Crime Prevention staffing
2. Do not make any changes in MCU/Crime Prevention (Option 1)

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Memo to CAO, dated January 20th, 2023
2. Table 1.1 – 2021 Nova Scotia Municipal Police Strength & Crime Severity
3. Table 1.2 – 2021 Nova Scotia Municipal Police Incident-Based Crime Statistics



AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

To: Jason MacDonald, CAO
From: Dwayne Pike, Chief of Police
RE: Major Crime Unit – Staffing
Date: 2023-01-20

As you are aware, the Major Crime Unit has been experiencing many difficulties in relation to the workload and expectations placed on the members assigned to this unit. As noted in many of the Monthly Police reports to both council and the Amherst Board of Police Commissioners, both Cpl Wood and Cst Goodwin continue to struggle with an enormous workload for two people. Our Major Crime Unit is responsible for the complex, sensitive and timely files and investigations that only a plainclothes/dayshift unit can address. We do not have adequate resources available or assigned to this unit to meet the demand or expectations placed upon them. The large amount of work involved in the investigation of these types of matters has meant a constant shuffling of these files in order to respond to priority files. This results in delays with many files because our resources are overwhelmed with higher priority or emergency investigations, many of which are governed by case law associated to timelines, techniques and protocols that we must abide by. As a result, we have often temporarily re-assigned platoon members to work with the MCU members in attempts to keep on top of our responsibilities.

At this time there are numerous investigation/files/complaints that have not been worked on for some time and require multiple warrants, interviews and review of hundreds of documents relating to warrant results to organize and prepare crown reports and identify concerns. Such files routinely include sexual assaults, child pornography, complex and high-loss frauds, suspicious deaths, and other serious matters.

In addition to these kinds of complaints, and prior to the loss of one of the MCU positions in July 2016, MCU was traditionally responsible for:

- Review/audit Domestic files;
- UCR Scoring and reviewing all files to ensure that they are properly scored;
- Review purge lists prior to physically purging hard copy files

- Develop and write Standing Orders/Policies
- ViCLAS Coordinators, reviewing files that require ViCLAS booklets and reporting
- Exhibit custodian
 - Filing and tracking exhibits
 - Exhibit room audits (quarterly)
- Review animal complaints/supervise animal control
- ACIIS Coordinator for Dept. Review ACIIS for information bulletins and forward to members
- DVR/video system (interview rooms) quality assurance and checks
- Deal with all firearms exhibits ensuring they are added to the PAIN system and arrange for firearms destruction
- DNA collection as a result of warrant or court-order as a result of sentencing
- Police Act Investigations
- Cover platoon when patrols are short (often cuts down on OT or use of part-timers)

With the elimination of the second MCU position in July of 2016, Sgt Lepper was left alone in MCU and many of these quality assurance items went to the wayside or were re-assigned to someone else. Assigning many of these tasks to a platoon member was not an option because of the nature of shiftwork. The exhibit custodian and related duties are still attached to MCU because it is a weekday schedule when members need exhibits retrieved. To deal with the MCU Caseload, we often found ourselves leaning heavily on our uniform Crime Prevention Officer and Patrol Members to assist. Even since that time, the work required to complete many of the files that go to MCU has continued to change drastically, in part because of the changes in technology and in part due to expectations of the courts and crowns in regards to the amount and type of information required in a Crown Package for prosecution. This has resulted in the resource crisis that we are facing in our investigative section.

As you are aware, the current situation has 2 people in MCU with the Crime Prevention position being filled by a civilian. The second MCU position was supposed to dedicate 50% of their time to drug enforcement, which again due to priority MCU files, has been extremely difficult and has not been achieved. This was approved for a period of 2 years which is due to expire in August/September 2023 at which time the expectation is that the second position in MCU would return to a uniformed Crime Prevention Officer.

As part of this decision-making process, its also important to consider some information and statistics.

The Amherst Police Department, since 2014 has lost 4 full-time positions. These include:

1. CISNS (Criminal Intelligence Service Nova Scotia) – 1 position paid for completely by the province. Our area lost this position and this service (which we have no real access to) is now out of Truro area. Cumberland RCMP also lost their CISNS position as this team worked out of our office.
2. 2 Full-time uniform 'flex' positions: These 2 positions enabled us to avoid overtime and schedule extra members for busy times or scheduled events. These positions were dissolved to pay for the new police building
3. Major Crime Constable: this position was cut as a result of budget cuts in 2016.

Stats Canada provides statistics that we can use when comparing our department to other similar size departments in Nova Scotia, most notably Truro, New Glasgow, & Bridgewater. The most recent stats are from 2021 and was discussed in the September 19, 2022 COW Police Monthly Report.

Police officers to Population: When compared to the other 3 municipalities, Amherst remains the lowest police to population of all 4. With an authorized full-time number of 24 police officers, our police to population rate is 251.7. New Glasgow has the highest ratio with 35 authorized members and a ratio of 302.9. Truro has 36 officers with a ratio of 278.3. Bridgewater, with the smallest population of the 4 municipalities has 25 members and a ratio of 282.3.

Incidents and incident Rate: Stats Canada tracks the number of criminal incidents that police departments report and respond to. In 2021, APD members responded to a total of 1,397 criminal incidents. New Glasgow responded to 1,627. Truro and Bridgewater responded to 959 and 690 respectively. Taking into consideration our population, Amherst had the highest incident rate of 14,353, followed by New Glasgow with 13,624 and then Truro and Bridgewater with 7,269 and 7,631 respectively.

Crime Severity: In regard to Crime Severity, Amherst had a crime severity index of 143.32 in 2021. This is the second highest compared to New Glasgow at 154.46, Truro at 83.90 and Bridgewater at 72.52. Amherst also came second in 'violent crime severity' at 179.01, while New Glasgow was 205.80, Truro was 150.75 and Bridgewater was 89.73. We were second with the 'non-violent crime severity index' of 130.14 as compared to New Glasgow (135.63), Truro (59.75) and Bridgewater (66.17).

I've put together the options available for staffing the Major Crime Unit and the Crime Prevention Position. I have to be clear: if the decision is made to discontinue the funding for the Civilian Crime Prevention position, it is not operationally viable or possible to revert back to a 1-person Major Crime Unit. I would have to keep the second person in MCU rather than returning back to a crime prevention officer. Going below 2 people in MCU is not an option and even with 2, it will require regular assistance and temporary re-assignments from the patrol section to adequately and appropriately conduct these kinds of investigations. Inevitably, this can often result in overtime or extra part-time costs when someone calls in sick on the platoon which is left short due to the temporary re-assignment.

OPTION #1 (CURRENT SITUATION/STATUS QUO)

Major Crime Unit

- 1 full time Corporal assigned
- 1 full time Constable assigned until end of Crime Prevention Contract (September 2023)

Crime Prevention

- 1 full time Civilian Crime Prevention Coordinator (until September 2023)
- 1 full time Uniformed Crime Prevention Officer (resumes in September 2023)

Costs: Status Quo. No extra costs.

Remarks: Not recommended. This option is not viable. MCU cannot continue with one member only in September. If required, the operational decision would be made to dissolve the Crime Prevention Position completely and keep the second member in MCU. This would create a gap in service, but would work towards ensuring that priority investigations and complaints get the attention they require. Even if the

second person was kept in MCU, it would require constant review of priorities due to workload and the inability to be proactive. Decisions are also often made to discontinue investigative files and efforts as a result of resourcing issues. We will have to often temporarily 'borrow' resources from patrol or other areas to address tasks. Crime prevention programs would be shelved or downsized, with some going to patrol members (which is also not ideal) or to the School Resource Officer. This option, regardless of the decision to dissolve Crime Prevention, has the temporary funding that is already approved by council.

OPTION #2

Major Crime Unit

- 1 full time Corporal assigned permanently
- 1 full time Constable assigned permanently

Crime Prevention

- 1 full time Civilian Crime Prevention Coordinator assigned permanently

Cost Estimate: Annual costs associated to the Civilian Crime Prevention position - **\$75,000.00** annually

Remarks: Not recommended. This provides MCU with permanent 2 positions, which is the current status (although temporary) and either extends or makes the civilian crime prevention position permanent. This ensures that we are able to provide Crime Prevention services via a civilian position. This option is basically our current situation with the change of the Civilian Crime Prevention to permanent. In this option, MCU is constantly reviewing priorities due to workload and unable to be proactive. Decisions are also often made to discontinue investigative files and efforts as a result of resourcing issues. Often have to temporarily 'borrow' resources from patrol or other areas to address tasks. At this time, there are still many files that have not been addressed/updated as a result of lack of resources. These keep getting shuffled as a result of higher priority files/investigations. With this level of resourcing, we are in a constant crisis, reviewing priorities and files and delaying investigations on a regular basis.

OPTION #3

Major Crime Unit

- 1 full time Corporal assigned permanently
- 1 full time Constable assigned permanently
- ½ full time Constable assigned Permanently

Crime Prevention

- ½ full time Constable as Crime Prevention Officer assigned permanently

Costs: Annual costs associated to addition of a full-time member - **\$128,000.00** annually

Remarks: Not recommended. This provides MCU with three staff to work with, but the third member would also be responsible for Crime Prevention duties, which can be affected by the workload and priorities. As crime prevention is more 'proactive' in nature, critical files and investigations will be priority and may affect the time and ability to do the crime prevention side. It also becomes hard to separate the 2 positions.

This option would not be available until after the expiry of the Civilian Crime Prevention agreement (September 2023). Extra funding required when comparing Option 2 and 3 would basically be the difference between the costs of the Civilian Crime Prevention and 1st Class Constable.

It should be noted that if an option were developed that had 3 persons in MCU and dissolving the Crime Prevention completely, it would likely result in the same option as this. The MCU, as they work a regular work-week would be left to deal with many of the responsibilities of Crime Prevention with some of the other responsibilities downloaded to the school resource officer.

Adding an additional member to our department brings us closer in line with other municipal departments whose authorized strength (rate per 100,000): 261.3 as compared to 278.3, 282.3 and 302.9

OPTION #4

Major Crime Unit

- 1 full time Corporal assigned permanently
- 2 full time Constables assigned permanently

Crime Prevention

- 1 full time Civilian Crime Prevention Coordinator assigned permanently

Costs: Annual costs associated to adding a full-time police position while keeping the Civilian Crime Prevention position - \$128,000 + \$75,000.00 = **\$203,000.00** annually

Remarks: Not recommended. This provides MCU with three staff to work with permanently and should enable the unit to function as it was originally meant to:

- To be able to address the workload assigned and complete investigations in a timely fashion and appropriate, using the proper investigative protocols
- to respond to most major incident with minor assistance from the patrol unit;
- to take over complex files from the uniformed patrol section
- to provide assistance to the patrol unit on files and be proactive with investigations
- to focus on many of the quality assurance initiatives that the unit had originally been in charge of

The Crime prevention coordinator in this option is a civilian position. As a result, and as expected, there are limits on their job duties/description and they cannot actively investigate criminal offenses, back up other members or be used in a police operation. The advantage of having a civilian crime prevention position is solely related to cost. Ideally the Crime Prevention position would be a Police Officer, as much more could be accomplished and that member could contribute to more initiatives and work assignments than just 'civilian' crime prevention programs.

Adding an additional member to our department brings us closer in line with other municipal departments whose authorized strength (rate per 100,000): 261.3 as compared to 278.3, 282.3 and 302.9

OPTION #5

Major Crime Unit

- 1 full time Corporal assigned permanently

- 2 full time Constables assigned permanently

Crime Prevention

- 1 full time Crime Prevention Officer (uniform/sworn member) assigned permanently

Costs: Annual costs associated to the addition of 2 full time police officers. 1 extra for MCU (for three total) and one for a Crime Prevention Officer - \$128,000 + \$128,000 = **\$256,000.00** annually

Remarks: Recommended. This provides MCU with three staff to work with permanently and should enable the unit to function as it was originally meant to:

- To be able to address the workload assigned and complete investigations in a timely fashion and appropriate, using the proper investigative protocols
- to respond to most major incident with minor assistance from the patrol unit;
- to take over complex files from the uniformed patrol section
- to provide assistance to the patrol unit on files and be proactive with investigations
- to focus on many of the quality assurance initiatives that the unit had originally been in charge of that have not be adequately addressed since 2016

The Crime Prevention Officer is a sworn uniform position with no limits as they can still respond to any call as a fully-trained operational police officer. They can actively investigate criminal offenses, back up other members or be used in any police operation. It has many advantages over the use of a civilian with the exception of cost.

Adding 2 members to our department brings us closer in line with other municipal departments whose authorized strength (rate per 100,000): 271.9 as compared to 278.3, 282.3 and 302.9

Table 1.1 - Police Personnel –Police Officer Strength & Crime Severity Index

(Information from 2021 Stats Canada Table: 35-10-0077-01)

	Amherst	Truro	New Glasgow	Bridgewater
Population	9,537	12,935	11,884	8,982
Total number of officers	24	36	25	25
Authorized Strength per 100,000 Population	251.7	278.3	302.9	278.3
Crime Severity Index	124.69	90.22	125.35	67.10

Table 1.2 - Incident-Based Crime Statistics

(Information from 2021 Stats Canada Table: 35-10-0178-01)

	Amherst	Truro	New Glasgow	Bridgewater
Actual incidents	1,374	946	1,598	667
Rate per 100,000	14,116.92	7,170.47	13,381.34	7,376.69
Violent CC Violations	361	188	516	219