



State of Vermont
Department of Public Safety
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To: Vermont General Assembly
From: Commissioner Michael Schirling, Department of Public Safety
Interim Executive Director William Sheets, VT Criminal Justice Training Council
Sheriff Bill Bohnyak, Chair, Law Enforcement Advisory Board
Via: House Committee on Government Operations
Senate Committee on Government Operations
Re: VT Police Academy – location within state government
Date: December 21, 2020

In October 2020 S.124/Act 166 directed:

“The Council, Law Enforcement Advisory Board, and Department of Public Safety shall consult with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and other interested stakeholders to determine whether:
(i) the Council should be reestablished within a State agency or other oversight entity; and
(ii) there should be more flexibility in the residential and field training required of law enforcement applicants, including whether applicants should be able to satisfy some aspects of basic training through experiential learning.”

(i) Location of VT Police Academy / VT Criminal Justice Council – preliminary summary

Regarding (i), the Department of Public Safety facilitated virtual meetings with the following stakeholders regarding the location of the Council and operations of the VT Police Academy within state government:

- VT Association of Chiefs of Police (representatives)
- VT Criminal Justice Training Council (full council prior to new council being seated)
- VT League of Cities & Towns (full board met to discuss)
- VT Sheriffs Association (representatives)
- Law Enforcement Advisory Board (full board)

There is broad agreement that as the complexity of training and other demands increase and the need for mindful investments in training continue, we recommend reestablishing the operational, administrative, and budgeting components of the Council and Training Academy within the Department of Public Safety. The Executive Director of the Council will report to the Commissioner on operational, administrative and budgeting matters while reporting to the Criminal Justice Council for the array of responsibilities that the Council is tasked with by statute.



Of note, this has historically been studied and recommended on a number of occasions in reports solicited by the General Assembly and others drafted in response to other initiatives. More detail on those reports is available on request.

There is broad agreement that additional investments in training are essential to keep up with the rapid pace of change that has been occurring for several years and has accelerated further in 2020. Attaching the operational and budgeting operations for the academy and the criminal justice council could help to mitigate some of those costs by leveraging much larger administrative capacity.

Additionally, having operations of such a critical component of government fall directly under a cabinet-level department of the Executive Branch is increasingly important.

There is also broad agreement that the representative structure of the Council should continue to guide training and oversight of the areas where the Council has statutory authority.

It should be noted that this recommendation is one part of broad and ongoing work on public safety modernization. Many components of that work can be found at dps.vermont.gov/modernization.

(ii) Assessment of flexibility in training delivery

In late November, an Interim Executive Director was identified and began work while the search for a full-time director was restarted. Additionally, the new Criminal Justice Council is being formed as this memo is being drafted. Flowing from the recommendation that the representative structure of the Council to continue to guide training and oversight, we are not yet in a position to make recommendations on future training delivery. That work will continue into 2021.