



Date of Council Meeting: September 8, 2015

**TOWN OF LEESBURG
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

Information Memo

Subject: Leesburg Police Citizen Support Team

Staff Contact: Joseph R. Price, Chief of Police

Council Action Required: None. Information only.

Staff Recommendation: None. Information only.

Commission Recommendation: Not applicable.

Fiscal Impact: The Fiscal Year 2016 budget allocation is \$3,132. This amount is used by the Citizens Support Team to purchase uniforms, equipment, and automobile liability insurance. In addition, the Town provides routine vehicle maintenance at no charge to the organization. The current estimated annual support is \$3,600.

Work Plan Impact: None.

Executive Summary: The Leesburg Police Citizens Support Team, Inc. was established in April 1996 as an integral part of community policing in the Town of Leesburg. The group is a nonprofit, volunteer organization of citizens who work closely with the Leesburg Police Department.

Background: Over the past nineteen years, members of the Leesburg Police Citizens Support Team (LPCSTI) have contributed thousands of hours of volunteer service to the Leesburg Police Department, (LPD) and to the Town. The organization has been recognized by federal, state, and local authorities, and is a registered organization in the National Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program. The team supports LPD and the community through a number of activities including, but not limited to, the distribution of DNA identification kits and child safety awareness materials; community patrol; safety seatbelt and street light surveys; direction of traffic and crowd control at special events, vehicular accidents, and emergency situations like the downtown fire in June of this year.

The Leesburg Police Citizen Support Team is an independent 501c3 corporation with a comprehensive set of bylaws and operational protocols. These bylaws establish the operational chain of command for the Support Team with an elected president, vice-president and other officers. Additionally, the bylaws establish procedures for vetting new members and disciplinary actions should the need arise; Article XII, Section 4 states that "Any member of the Corporation may be removed from membership without recourse upon the request of the Chief of Police of the Leesburg Police Department." During my tenure, there has only been one instance involving inappropriate action by a LPCSTI member. Upon my reporting, LPCSTI leadership took immediate and proper action to rectify the issue.

The Virginia Municipal League (VML) Insurance has confirmed that in the event members of the LPCSTI are accused of negligent or inappropriate behavior and the Town is named as a party in a lawsuit, VML Insurance will defend any lawsuit brought against the Town. However, the Town Attorney is reviewing the by-laws and the structure of the organization to determine if there are additional ways to shield the Town from liability while allowing LPCSTI to continue to greatly assist the LPD and Town residents.

Concerning finances, the majority of LPCSTI funding comes from community donations. A small allocation (\$3,132 in Fiscal Year 2016) is listed as a program budget under the LPD's budget. Additionally, the LPD has provided LPCSTI with radios (Town Council approved) and on occasion, decommissioned LPD vehicles are donated to LPCSTI (Town Council action/approval required). Titles to the vehicles are transferred to the LPCSTI and it becomes the lawful owner of the vehicles. All vehicles currently owned and operated by LPCSTI are unmarked; when needed, the LPCSTI uses magnetic signs to identify the purpose of vehicle. The Town does provide gas, oil and minor vehicle repairs. As these vehicles are privately owned, they are insured under LPCSTI's own insurance policy.

There are several different models in place regarding community volunteers assisting police. One is a reserve program through the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services ("DCJS") which requires significant police oversight and training. In order to become a reserve program certified by the DCJS, the LPD would be required to devote additional resources. Another option for localities is to establish an auxiliary police force where the volunteers are directly under the LPD instead of an independent corporation. This too would require additional LPD resources for oversight, and an ordinance to include the auxiliary police force in the Town Code as opposed to our current role of liaison.

In April of 2016, the Leesburg Police Citizens Support Team will celebrate 20 years of outstanding service to the Leesburg community. During those 20 years, this team model has worked exceptionally well. Team members have provided many thousands of hours of volunteer service to this community. They respond day or night, good weather or bad, and they are the epitome of community service. Over the years, the team has evolved from a community patrol purpose to a community outreach purpose. At a time when communities across the country are struggling with improving community/police relations, we are truly fortunate to have a strong cadre of citizen volunteers to help us in this endeavor.