

Springfield Police Department Attrition Rate Increasing for Various Reasons (Viewpoint)

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By Cheryl C. Clapprood | Springfield Police Department superintendent

We have had several young officers resign recently for other opportunities both in and out of law enforcement. Resignations and retirements are not an uncommon thing to us recently. Unfortunately, gone are the days when someone leaves because they have turned sixty-five and put in over forty years.

There are two of those dinosaurs left, Deputy Chief William Cochrane and myself. Deputy Chief Cochrane will retire the end of April, the month of his sixty-fifth birthday and I will go by May of next year. Bill and I both have felt pride and great satisfaction in our profession. The difference now with younger officer is scrutiny and disrespect can wear you down. The lack of support and misunderstanding, criticism of your profession by even family and friends, takes a toll. If you do not have military experience and you are just out of high school or a few years of college, dealing with these emotions can be overwhelming. When I first started many of the officers I learned from were former military people. Some had been through Vietnam and others Afghanistan or Iraq. They were respected and had gone through enough where whatever the police department could throw at them, they knew how to handle it. Those of us who had not gone through combat, learned from those who had.

Training is good, class room training or simulation training, firearms qualifications, are excellent and needed but there is an element to experience that cannot be replicated. I describe it like a teenager learning to drive. The classroom setting is good and needed to understand the rules of the road, driving with an instructor is important to see how the young driver responds. There are so many variables while driving, so many different situations you can find yourself in that it comes down to experience. It would help law enforcement to come up with incentives to keep those officers and supervisors who retire as soon as possible, around longer for their experience and guidance. I am not hoping for any incentive to keep anyone longer than sixty-five, after a forty plus year career I am believer you deserve to leave and feel satisfied and content with your accomplishments.

We are in the planning stages for another Leadership class with Babson University. The class was successful and appreciated last year; we put twelve Lieutenants through the one day a week, seven week course. The course was well received by the Lieutenants who attended last year. The supervisors know their jobs and the laws we enforce but we wanted a curriculum that thinks outside the box. The subjects taught include developing a plan for future development and sustainable change, what differentiates between outstanding leaders and those who simply occupy the role, and taking care of one self the leading with emotional competence. The course and the overtime to fill the vacancies of the attendees is available to us by a grant.

After a hiatus due to the pandemic, our Citizens Police Academy has returned. Captain David Kane and his Academy Staff are running this 12-week program that offers citizens of Springfield insight into how police officers perform their duties and how the department serves the community. Everyone benefits from enhancing citizen understanding of the role and function of the police. I look forward to getting feedback from our attendees as they go through the program.

The quarterly report from the compliance evaluator to the Federal Court Judge for our Settlement Agreement was completed and we are in very good standing as far accomplishments made by the department to date. New policies were formulated and put out on our website for review, after a two week review period they were signed into effect. The settlement agreement unit led by Captain Brian Beliveau has conducted roll call training for all officers and supervisors in all units of the department to ensure understanding of the new policies. There were training videos made along with explanation from

the Captain or one of his Sergeants. I encourage you to visit our website at springfieldmapolice.com and read the new policies to gain a better understanding.

Congratulations to Sergeant Phil McBride and Officer Richard Ward on their recent retirements, best of health and happiness to you both!

Cheryl C. Clapprood is superintendent of the Springfield Police Department.

Information on the Springfield Police Department's community calendar is available on the department's website, springfieldmapolice.com, and Facebook page, [Facebook.com/SpringfieldPoliceDeptMA](https://www.facebook.com/SpringfieldPoliceDeptMA).