

Hollister Police Department: Staffing

**Conducted by
Law and Justice Committee**

Issued July 31, 2008



**County of San Benito
Civil Grand Jury
2007-2008**

HOLLISTER POLICE DEPARTMENT: STAFFING

SUMMARY

For the last several years, the City of Hollister has been faced with a budgetary crisis requiring it to cut back public services, including public safety services. The Hollister Police Department now employs fewer sworn officers than it did in 2003. The police force has had to make tough decisions in terms of prioritizing to which incidents officers shall respond. In addition, the Police Department has suspended several of its programs, particularly its crime prevention programs. With the passing of Measure T, the City of Hollister is proposing to use the additional funds that will be generated from the extra one-cent tax, to fund 8 sworn officers over the next two years.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY

Members of the Law and Justice Committee of the San Benito County Civil Grand Jury were interested in learning answers to the following questions:

- What is the current level of staffing at the Hollister Police Department?
- What does the future look like for increasing the staff level?
- With budget cuts, how effective has the Police Department been in providing law enforcement services?

METHODOLOGY

Members of the Law and Justice Committee of the Grand Jury interviewed the Hollister police staff, as well as elected and appointed officials of the City of Hollister and the San Benito County Board of Supervisors. Jurors examined public documents and Web sites relating to the Hollister Police Department. Jurors also reviewed local newspapers as secondary sources.

DISCUSSION

The Hollister Police Department is located at 395 Apollo Court, about 6 miles north of downtown. This agency is responsible for providing law enforcement services to the City of Hollister. In contrast, the San Benito County Sheriff's Office has jurisdiction over San Juan Bautista and all the unincorporated areas within San Benito County.

The Hollister Police Department currently is budgeted to employ 29 sworn police officers. The staff of peace officers includes 1 police chief, 2 captains, 1 detective bureau head, 2 detectives, 7 sergeants, and 16 patrol officers.

These officers are charged with the duty of enforcing all criminal and traffic laws within the Hollister city limits. They are responsible for preserving the peace, protecting lives

and property, apprehending criminals, maintaining good relationships with the public, and performing various administrative tasks (such as report writing).

Police officers enforce numerous criminal laws, handling various types of crime every day. Figure 1 displays statistics for some criminal offenses in the categories of violent crime and property crime that were reported to the Hollister Police Department during the years 2003 through 2006.

Figure 1 Annual Hollister Crime Statistics, 2003-2006

VIOLENT CRIMES				
Offense	2003¹	2004	2005	2006
Willful Homicide	2	0	0	2
Forcible Rape	10	18	8	6
Robbery	23	29	29	28
Aggressive Assault	166	138	118	90
PROPERTY CRIMES				
Burglary	293	200	214	316
Vehicle Theft	114	104	160	134
Larceny	845	629	659	530

¹ Data reported annually in October.

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, 2007 (from statistics provided by Hollister Police Department).

“UNDERSTAFFED”

In general, interviews that the Grand Jury held with elected and appointed officials of the City and San Benito County, many of the officials expressed that the Police Department is understaffed.

According to police staff, the police department is understaffed and has not kept up with the growth in Hollister. The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2000 that the population of Hollister was 34,413. This agency estimated that in 2006, the population was approximately 35,690.

While the population in Hollister increased, the staffing level of the Hollister police force decreased due to budget cuts. In 2003, the Police Department employed 34 sworn officers and by 2005, there were 29 sworn officers (see Figure 2).

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Figure 2 Hollister Police Department Sworn Officer Staffing Level, 2003 - 2006

Year ¹	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of Sworn Officers	34	30	29	29

¹ Years reported each October.

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, *Crime in the United States* (2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007).

Opinions among citizens and experts vary as to the number of police officers needed to provide sufficient coverage of protection to a community. The Police staff has expressed in interviews that Hollister should have 55 sworn officers to serve a city of its size.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), an office within the U.S. Bureau of Justice, provides data on local police personnel in the United States in its *Local Police Department* report every few years. Based on this data, BJS determines the average ratio of full-time officers per 1,000 residents by the size of population served. For a community with the population size between 25,000 and 49,999, the average ratio of full-time officers per 1,000 residents is 1.8 full-time officers.

Today, the City of Hollister has an estimated population of 35,690 (per U.S. Census estimates for year 2006). The current staffing of sworn officers in the Hollister Police department is 29. This means the ratio of officers per 1,000 residents is currently 0.8 (less than half of the documented BJS ratio). Using the BJS ratio, Hollister should have 64.2 full-time officers.

LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

Beginning in January 2007, the Police Department shortened its public hours because of lack of funds. The public may visit or call the department between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The office is closed on weekends and holidays.

Because of the staff shortage, the Police Department has had to prioritize the types of crimes to which it responds. According to police staff, the department prioritizes criminal incidents involving persons over criminal incidents involving property. The Police Department states that the department has no available staff to address traffic enforcement within the City.

Police programs are staff generated. That is, police officers are needed to run programs or details such as gang task or SWAT. Because of budget cuts, the Police Department has had to suspend the following programs, according to Hollister Police Web site (as of May 22, 2008):

- **Drug Abuse and Resistance Education (DARE) Program:** a youth drug prevention program.
- **Crime Prevention Program:** a variety of workshops, programs, and presentations about crime prevention and safety awareness.
- **Citizen Police Academy:** a 12-week program that teaches citizens the policies and procedures of the Hollister Police Department.
- **Youth Academy:** a 7-week program that teaches young persons the policies and procedures of the police department

MEASURE T FUNDS

In November 2007, voters of the City of Hollister passed Measure T, a local resolution to increase sales tax one percent from 7.25 percent to 8.25 percent for the next 5 years. Measure T supporters, including city officials, campaigned that the money raised from the sales tax would go to funding more public safety positions, including police officers. In April 2008, the City of Hollister proposed funding of 8 law enforcement officers over the next two fiscal years, from 2008-2010. This is based on the projection of money generated from the additional one percent sales tax. Figure 3 shows the proposed distribution of funds for staff and programs for the Hollister Police Department. (Note: The animal shelter is under the authority of the Police Department.)

With the City of Hollister’s proposal to add 8 officers to the police force over the next two years, the total number of sworn officers could increase to 37.

Figure 3 Proposed Distribution of Measure T Funds for the Hollister Police Department

Fiscal Year	Sworn Officer Positions	Non-Sworn Officer Positions	Police Program Funding	Animal Shelter
2008-09	2 School Patrol 2 General Patrol	2 CSO (half-time) 1 Police Services	Juvenile Impact	1 Support Services Asst.
2008-10	2 Detectives 1 General Patrol 1 Sergeant (personnel and community service)	--	SWAT Crime Prevention	--

Source: City of Hollister Administration, *Service Restoration and Enhancement* (Unpublished). April 2008.

FINDINGS

- F1.** The Police Department currently has 29 sworn officers on staff.
- F2.** The police force has been reduced from 34 sworn officers in 2003 to 29 sworn officers in 2008.
- F3.** The Police Department prioritizes the calls to which it responds, handling all crimes against persons before any crimes against property.
- F4.** The City of Hollister has proposed using Measure T funds to fill 8 sworn-officer positions over the next 2 fiscal years.
- F5.** The Police Department has suspended various crime prevention programs because of lack of funds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1.** Hire at least 8 more sworn officers with Measure T funds over the next two fiscal years (based on Findings F1 through F5).
- R2.** Seek grants and other sources of funding for re-establishing the various crime prevention programs that are currently suspended because of lack of funds (based on Finding F5).

RESPONSE REQUIRED

- To comply with the Penal Code, including sections 933 and 933.03 (see page viii of this document), the following affected agency (or agencies) shall respond to all relevant findings and recommendations, especially, without limitations, to the findings and/or recommendations specified below.
- The City of Hollister shall respond to the recommendations R1 and R2.
- The Hollister Police Department is requested to respond to recommendations R1 and R2.

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