

The Maine Chiefs of Police Association
Review of the

Thomaston Police Department



July 2025

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	4
Report Objectives	6
Review Panel Mission Statement	7
Community Overview	8
Police Department Overview	9
Department Mission, Goals, Objectives	10
Administration	11
Budget	12
Community Relations	14
Crime Analysis	16
Record Keeping and Information Technology	18
Department Communications	20
Dispatch	21
Patrol Services	22
Workload	23
Staffing and Deployment	24
Supervision	26
Arrests: Processing and Transport	27
Use of Force	28
School Resource Officer	29
Investigations	30
Property and Evidence Management	31
Facilities	38
Equipment	40
Personnel	47
Recruitment / Selection / Retention	47
Promotions	48
Morale	49
Labor Relations / Collective Bargaining	50
Internal Affairs	51
Policies and Procedures	52
Training	54
Summary and Conclusions	55
Exhibit A: 2024 Total Incident Report.	58

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**The Review Panel
and the
Maine Chiefs of Police Association
wish to thank the following for their essential input and cooperation:**

Thomaston Town Manager Kara George

Thomaston Department Heads

Interim Chief of Police Chris Hansen

Staff and Officers of the Thomaston Police Department

and

**Community members of the Town of Thomaston and partnering law enforcement and
communications professionals**

INTRODUCTION

In the Spring of 2025, the *Maine Chiefs of Police Association* received a request for an evaluation of the Thomaston Police Department. The Thomaston Town Manager requested a comprehensive study of the Thomaston Police Department as well as a report containing recommendations based on the review's findings. Interim upon this request, the Board of Directors of the *Maine Chiefs of Police Association* agreed to undertake such a study. Recognizing the need for objectivity in the assessment of the operation of the Thomaston Police Department, the Association selected a Review Panel comprised of three police chiefs who were not acquainted with the operations of the department or the history of the town and its residents. Members of the Panel were:

Chief Scott Stewart, Panel Chair Brunswick Police Department

- 35 years Law Enforcement experience, 4 years as Captain, 5 years as Chief of Police
- Master's Degree in Criminal Justice, Boston University
- Bachelor of Science Degree in Public Administration, University of Maine Augusta
- Graduate of the FBI National Academy, Session 282
- Vice President, Maine Chiefs of Police Association
- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Committee Member – Police Professional Standards, Ethics, and Image
- Member: Maine Chiefs of Police Association, New England Chiefs of Police Association, International Association of Chiefs of Police, FBI National Academy Associates

Chief John F. Kilbride Falmouth Police Department

- 30 years Law Enforcement experience, 10 years as Lieutenant, 7 years as Chief of Police
- Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice, Husson University
- Associate's Degree in Fire Science, Southern Maine Community College
- Graduate of the FBI National Academy, Session 244
- Treasurer, Maine Chiefs of Police Association
- Board Member: Milestone Recovery Foundation, Maine Chiefs of Police
- Member: New England Association of Chiefs of Police, International Association of Chiefs of Police, FBI National Academy Associates

Chief Marc R. Hagan Topsham Police Department

- 34 years Law Enforcement experience
- 8 years as Patrol Commander Brunswick Police Department
- 4 years as Chief of Lisbon Police Department
- 5 years as Chief of Topsham Police Department

- Associate’s Degree in Criminal Justice, University of Maine
- Bachelor’s Degree in Administration of Justice, University of Maine
- Board Member: Law Enforcement Against Drugs and Violence Educational Program
- Member: Maine Chiefs of Police Association, New England Chiefs of Police Association

As requested, the Review Panel initiated a study of operational and management practices within the Thomaston Police Department in the Spring of 2025. The review was conducted in three general phases. They were:

Phase 1: Review of Materials

In conjunction with the on-site evaluation, the Panel members individually and collectively reviewed pertinent materials supplied by the Town of Thomaston and the Thomaston Police Department. These materials included, but were not limited to:

- Town of Thomaston Annual Report 2024-2025
- Thomaston Police Department Budgets
- Thomaston Police Policies and Procedures
- Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the Police Union and the Town
- Call for Service Data and Crime Statistics

Phase 2: On-Site Evaluation

From April 4th, 2025 through July 9th, 2025, the Review Panel conducted several on-site evaluations. The on-site evaluations included personal observations of the Thomaston Police Department by Panel members, as well as interviews that were conducted with individuals from both in and outside of the town government who possessed relevant information regarding the activities of Thomaston PD. Those interviewed included, but were not limited to:

- Town Manager Kara George
- Interim Chief of Police Christopher Hansen
- Thomaston Patrol Staff (current and former)
- Citizens within the community
- Area businesses
- Department Heads of Thomaston
- School Officials
- Neighboring Police Chief and Sheriff
- Knox County Dispatch Center

The Review Panel sent numerous emails to the District Attorney, beginning on April 21st, 2025, to try to facilitate an in-person meeting, zoom meeting, or phone call as part of this evaluation. Most of the emails went unanswered. After multiple follow-ups, over the course of weeks, the

DA offered two different dates/times to meet. Ultimately, when a day was agreed to, there was no further response from the DA's office.

Additionally, the on-site evaluation included the inspection, analysis, and review of:

- Department Equipment
- Police Budget
- Facilities
- Training Records
- Records and Data Management Systems
- Knox County Communications Center
- Department Policies
- Collective Bargaining Agreement – Fraternal Order of Police

Phase 3: Analysis and Report

Besides the on-site evaluations, the Review Panel met on multiple occasions to analyze gathered information and materials, in order to generate this report. The following is the work product of the Thomaston Police Department Review Panel. The focus areas of this report are arranged so that the reader is provided with a general explanation and/or philosophy regarding the focus area, findings, and any recommendations for modification or improvement made by the Review Panel.

The delivery of this report was delayed at the request of the Town Manager, who believed it would be most beneficial to coincide with the incoming Select Board.

REPORT OBJECTIVES

The intent of this report is not to criticize the present police department, its practices, or those responsible for them. Rather, the Review Panel's goal is to present, in an objective fashion, a comprehensive set of recommendations which, if adopted, should result in improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of the Thomaston Police Department.

This report should not be considered as an indictment of the past, but rather as a blueprint for the future. This report is not to be construed as a "report card" of the Thomaston Police Department, since it does not fully explore the many positive activities which are undoubtedly and presently undertaken by the department.

Finally, the Review Panel sincerely hopes that its efforts serve as a catalyst for positive change within the Thomaston Police Department and urges all those interested – town officials, department members, and concerned citizens – to seize this opportunity to bolster the professional status and effectiveness of the Thomaston Police Department.

REVIEW PANEL MISSION STATEMENT

To provide, through application of law enforcement best practices and through diligent effort, care, and research, a navigable pathway to an elevated delivery of police services. To recognize the noble efforts of the members of the Thomaston Police Department and, through this work, to enhance their safety and wellness.

One never hears that a police department is doing **too good** a job, or that the officers and administrators are **too dedicated** or **too well-trained**. Frequently, police hear are complaints of real or perceived shortcomings, frequently by those with little or no basis of knowledge to level that criticism. However, as self-critical professionals constantly striving for the betterment of ourselves and those in our charge; we acknowledge that no department is perfect and that as humans, we are fallible. Consequently, to better ensure a reasonable and realistic perspective, the Review Panel has striven to identify positive areas in this department as well as those that would benefit the organization and the town from change and improvement.

It is becoming an accepted event for the leaders of a community to request that an outside group of experienced and qualified professionals conduct an audit of the management and practices within their police department. These requests are often preceded by some organizational change, such as a new Town Manager or Police Chief. Occasionally, these requests are preceded by an extended period of conflict within the agency.

Faulty perceptions, rumors, unreasonable expectations, and poor communication can easily become destructive components in the organizational equation that must be identified and excised in order to allow accurate findings and to make good and viable recommendations.

Law enforcement officers are selected for many personal attributes, including assertiveness, the ability to make quick decisions, and take decisive action. These same attributes can create challenges in convincing every employee to form up and march in the same direction. Police administrators stand on a slippery rock in the middle of a stream with far too many people willing to give them a nudge in the wrong direction. In no other municipal profession is one expected to govern individuals who possess the power, authority, and autonomy of police officers. To do so willingly, with a caring and compassionate attitude, and where every move and decision is a matter of public record, is not a task for the faint of heart. It demands unwavering integrity, emotional intelligence, and a steadfast commitment to justice – all while navigating immense public scrutiny and institutional resistance.

Society rightfully demands the best from its police. Overwhelmingly, police officers serve with the selfless desire to protect their community from humanity's worst. We hope this report helps them to achieve their admirable goal.

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Known as “The Town that Went to Sea”, the Town of Thomaston is a community of 2,767 residents (2020 Census) located with US Route 1 traveling through it. The total town area is approximately 11.48 square miles, of which 10.94 square miles is land and .54 square miles is water. Thomaston a coastal community in Knox County and overlooks the head of the St. George River. Thomaston shares a border with Rockland, South Thomaston, Cushing, and Warren.

Thomaston has a Town Meeting – Select Board – Town Manager form of government, with the annual Town Meeting taking place in June for residents to vote on expenditures. The Police Chief reports to the Town Manager.

According to the 2020 Census, Thomaston’s population is similar to, if not slightly less diverse, than the State of Maine, and is broken down as follows:

Race	Percentage
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.5
Asian	1.2
Black or African American	0.6
Hispanic or Latino	2.6
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1
Some Other Race	0.7
Two or More Races	5.5
White	91.3

The population density of Thomaston is 250.4 people per square mile (2020 Census), which is much denser than Maine’s average of 44.2.

The median household income for Thomaston (in 2020 dollars) is \$53,775, much lower than the state’s household income of \$73,733. The average travel time to work for a Thomaston resident is 16.2 minutes.

The Town is part of School District RSU 13.

Easily assessable by way of scenic US Rt. 1, Thomaston is well known for its “village” area which hosts various gift shops, cafes, and antique stores. The eastern part of town is an up-and-coming commercial district with several chain stores either already opened, or in various stages of construction.

The Town continues to retain its historic charm and is a popular tourist location on the mid-coast. The Town’s commercial district hosts a significant number of large businesses including

Dragon Cement, Wal-Mart, Lowe's Home Improvement, Tractor Supply, two car dealerships, a movie theatre, and a three-story commercial hotel

Thomaston hosts a day-long 4th of July celebration that includes community meals, various events, and a parade. The day ends with a large firework display that draws crowds from all over the region.

POLICE DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Thomaston Police Department (TPD) has an authorized complement of seven full-time officers, a part-time reserve patrol officer position, a part-time harbormaster position, and one part-time office assistant. The organizational makeup is as follows:

- (1) Chief
- (1) Sergeant
- (5) Patrol Officers
- (1) Part-time "Reserve" Patrol Officer
- (1) Part-time "Traffic Enforcement" Officer
- (1) Part-time administrative position

The Thomaston Police Department provides 24-hour police protection for the community. Thomaston has a unique patrol schedule where its' officers work two days, back-to-back, in a 48-hour patrol schedule. The officers seem to enjoy this schedule with several stating the 48-hour schedule is what brought them to, and keeps them at, Thomaston PD. The officers are scheduled in a format that has one officer working their first day as their partner officer is working their second day.

The previous Chief reportedly worked a 48-hour schedule. This made basic administrative communications with the Town Manager, and the public, difficult as the Chief of the agency had no set schedule. The Town will be requiring the next Chief of Police to work four, 10-hour days for a 40-hour work week.

The Sergeant position is currently empty as Sergeant Hansen serves as "Interim Chief". When filled, the Sergeant works in a 48-hour patrol shift.

The part-time "reserve" patrol officer position currently works an 18-hour shift on Saturdays to assist the lone scheduled f/t patrol officer. The part-time "traffic enforcement" officer works 12 hours a week. The part-time administrative position is currently budgeted for 12 hours a week. This position is currently filled by the "traffic enforcement officer". There is currently no set hourly working schedule for the administrative position.

Dispatching is handled 24/7 by the Knox County Communications Center. This system appears to work adequately for the department and community.

The TPD would request assistance from the Maine State Police Tactical Team were an emergency, requiring specialized training and tactics, to occur. The Thomason PD currently has officers conduct their own investigations but requests assistance from the Knox County Sheriff's Office for larger criminal investigations.

There are two schools located in Thomaston, the Thomaston Grammar School and Oceanside Middle School. The Rockland Police Department has a School Resource Officer (SRO) who serves the school district (RSU-13), including Thomaston schools, and advises TPD when the SRO is in Town. Thomaston Officers also make appearances at the schools to visit when possible.

Thomaston PD appears to enjoy the support of the community. Visits with local residents found no complaints and officers appear satisfied with their schedules, equipment, and facility.

DEPARTMENT MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Department Mission: A mission statement is a formal summary of the aims and values of an organization. Its effectiveness is determined by how well it is constructed, communicated to - and internalized by - members of the organization, and whether it is used to inform agency goals and objectives. A mission statement should clearly communicate what the agency does. Many mission statements succumb to an overuse of words. A good mission statement should be clear, concise, and useful.

Department Goals: Goals are broad, over-arching destinations that an organization intends to reach. A generic example of a police department goal (not necessarily relevant for TPD) might be "a 25% reduction in shoplifting".

Department Objectives: Objectives are the specific steps an organization intends to take in order to achieve established goals. In order to achieve the desired goal of a reduction in shoplifting, a department might establish an objective to "impart theft detection training to 10 retail stores", or "initiate a social media campaign to discourage shoplifting", or "target shoplifting through a combination of uniformed and plainclothes patrols through retail stores for two hours per day, five days per week".

Department missions, goals, and objectives should all complement each other, and must never be in conflict.

Department Mission / Goals / Objectives - Findings:

The Thomaston Police Department mission statement reads:

The primary mission of the police force is crime prevention and the protection of life and property. The laws and police procedures related to them are promoted by police agencies for the purpose of maintaining order and continuity. The basis, however, of all police action is the

law enforcement profession will be measured by its contribution to the welfare of man, its concern for excellence, and by the guidance it provides to its members toward a high level of ethical practice. The Thomaston Police Department endeavors to plan, develop and institute the most efficient and cost-effective police service that contributes to the well-being of the citizens within our jurisdiction. We strive to provide the highest quality law enforcement and public safety services possible, sometimes mixed with a little bit of humor to brighten someone's day.

The department also has established a "Value Statement" that reads: *A PROUD tradition of SERVICE through EXCELLENCE, INTEGRITY, and COURTESY.* The department mission and value statement are noted on the department's website and in their Standard Operating Procedure manual.

Department Mission / Goals / Objectives - Recommendations:

Thomaston PD currently has a lengthy mission statement, mixed with goals and objectives. The agency should consider reviewing their stated mission on a regular basis, to ensure it continues to accomplish its intent. Input from a cross-section of the department should be sought in any update or replacement of the mission statement. This will improve the acceptance and internalization of the mission by all department personnel.

The mission statement should be a prominent part of the department. It should be published or posted in areas likely to be seen on a regular basis by department members.

Many small police departments do not engage in structured goal and objective setting. However, if possible, the department should work to establish annual goals and objectives. Objectives should be sanctioned by the municipal government, as there may be a fiscal component, and communicated clearly and regularly to all members of the agency. Goals and objectives should be reviewed regularly to determine whether they are still relevant, and how well the department is meeting them.

If mission, goal, and objective establishment cannot be accomplished internally, there are professional facilitators readily available to assist with the process.

ADMINISTRATION

The administration of any police agency should not be undertaken by anyone who is not willing to sacrifice a significant amount of time and effort. Police Chiefs are entrusted with millions of taxpayer dollars. In turn, they are expected to spend those dollars wisely.

To be effective, a Chief must become a proficient personnel and resource manager, financial planner, labor negotiator, mentor and visionary. He or she must be engaged not only in the department and community, but also with professional peers and organizations. The Chief must stay informed about developments in law, professional best practices, and industry norms to

maintain credibility with staff and the public - most importantly, to ensure officer safety and minimize the inherent risks in policing.

As with any organization, the administration is the key to organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The Police Chief must be a leader and must set an example for the members of the department to follow.

In the Thomaston Police Department, the administration consists of the Police Chief and one Sergeant. Direct supervision of line staff is performed by the Chief or Sergeant on duty. The department should have an organizational chart which clearly delineates each staff member's position in the agency and the person to whom the employee reports. In a paramilitary organization like a police department, this organizational chart is often referred to as the "chain of command," due to the necessity of clear lines of communication and responsibility.

Budget and Cost of Police Services

The budget should be based on a plan, accepted by the local unit of government, to determine the department's course of action during the fiscal year. The budget becomes a document that guides the agency's operations. During the budgeting process certain principles should be observed:

1. The focus should be on both present and future problems.
2. Budgeting should be considered as one aspect of many when planning the department's direction.
3. Budgets should be created to meet the goals and objectives of the agency. Specific, attainable, and measurable objectives need to be set if overall goals are to be met.

Even in times of static or decreasing funding, department goals and objectives must be reviewed and revised within the framework of the budget process. Failure to do so results in stagnation.

Police work is a 24-hour, 365-day business. As a result, overtime costs can greatly exceed predictions due to unforeseen absences and circumstances. The United States Fair Labor Standards Act and the Garcia decision combine to require the payment of overtime for required training and extended workdays, after 40 hours in a week.

Every community makes decisions about the appropriate level of funding for their law enforcement services. While this Review Panel will make suggestions that we believe to be appropriate and fiscally responsible, only the leaders of the Town of Thomaston, armed with knowledge of the needs of the entire town, can decide whether they will accept or are willing to finance these suggestions.

Budget and Cost of Police Services - Findings:

In most public safety agency budgets, personnel expenses account for the greatest portion of the budget. Thomaston PD’s current Fiscal Year budget appears to bear this out, with approximately 81% of the budget in salary and benefits and 11% in department operations.

The Thomaston Town Manager prepares the initial budget and then seeks input from the Police Chief. The Interim Chief explained that he, in turn, has conversations with officers about any recommendations as well. The Town Manager then submits the final budget.

After reviewing the current budget, the Panel finds no issues and notes that the allocations and expenditures appear consistent with professional standards.

Per capita cost for police protection was figured using a population of 2767 in 2024 (Source: US Census). Thomaston’s cost for police services during the current budget year with an approved budget of \$1,056,369 equals \$381.77 per capita. Comparative analysis with other town police departments is difficult, due to a lack of consistency in budgeting processes. For example, some towns budget for all employee benefit costs in an HR or similar budget instead of tracking those expenses in the PD budget. Some budgets include building maintenance, part-time staff, or Parking or Animal Control in Police Budgets, while others either do not fund such positions or place them under other Municipal Budgets. **Keeping in mind that the comparison may be flawed due to these variables, we offer the following:**

TOWN	POPULATION (2020 US CENSUS DATA)	POLICE BUDGET	POLICE COSTS PER RESIDENT
Thomaston	2,767	\$ 1,056,369	\$ 381.77
Waldoboro	5,154	\$ 1,391,897	\$ 270.06
Rockport	3,644	\$ 1,400,000	\$ 384.19
Camden	5,232	\$ 1,803,000	\$ 344.61
Wiscasset	3,742	\$ 937,000	\$ 250.66

Budget and Cost of Police Services – Recommendations:

The Review Panel recognizes that the Thomaston Police Department has an appropriate budget in the interest of the taxpayer.

However, serious considerations should be addressed in the budget to manage preexisting issues noted in this report with evidence processing, equipping emergency vehicles, software, and general maintenance of the facility.

Community Relations

No law enforcement agency can be effective without community support. This can be particularly true in a community like Thomaston; the police department is perhaps the most visible embodiment of town government and the only one that is consistently present in the community.

Citizens have greater impact on decisions than ever before and demand a voice regarding the provision of police services. Developing a positive relationship with the community is the responsibility of every professional law enforcement officer. Favorable relationships and working collaboratively with the members of a community can cultivate the support necessary to succeed.

Enlightened law enforcement administrators accept, as a basic tenet of their profession, the statement that “the police should be a part of the community, not apart from it”. While many police agencies profess to be community oriented, a large number are program driven and do not philosophically embrace a true partnership between the police and the community they serve.

What is a community? When defined as a group of people living in the same place (the residents of Thomaston) or having a particular characteristic in common (other department heads, neighboring police departments, non-profits, etc.), it quickly becomes obvious that much of what police departments do, police administrators specifically, must be considered community relations.

The Review Panel realizes that it is difficult to assess a department’s relationship with its community, based upon the very limited amount of time allotted for this evaluation. We do believe, however, that underlying trends can be identified while keeping in mind that the most vocal respondents do not necessarily represent the majority view.

Community Relations - Findings:

A community event was publicly advertised for May 6th, 2024 at 6PM. The event was organized by the Town Manager to provide a forum for residents to provide any feedback regarding their Police Department. The event was advertised locally and through social media. It was very well attended and lasted for approximately an hour. The meeting was also recorded and was made available for review on-line. Some members of the department, including the Interim Police Chief, attended and remained at the back of the room. Interim Chief Hansen offered for officers to leave the room in case citizens wanted to feel free to speak to the Panel. However, citizens said it was fine for them to remain. It was very apparent to the Panel that residents were clearly supportive of the Police Department, with many speaking positively about the department and at one point giving members a round of applause.

There was no interest from any of the citizens present to consider disbanding the Thomaston Police Department and contract with the Knox County Sheriff's Office for police services. There was a discussion between citizens, the Panel, and members of the department about the current work schedule; the conversation covered the pros and cons.

During onsite visits in Thomaston, the Panel was able to speak with several community members and store employees to ask their general views of the Police Department. All reported having a positive opinion of the agency. Some mentioned the lack of manpower and, as a result, not seeing a police presence as much as in years past.

The three Panel members provided their contact information to the public, however did not receive any complaints, reinforcing the Panel's belief that the community's perception of TPD is neutral or positive.

The Panel interviewed all Town of Thomaston department heads in order to get a sense of the level of communication, responsiveness, and effectiveness of the PD. Some department heads expressed some minor constructive criticism about the Police not being "visible" as much as in years past (similar to several citizen's statements). Also, the Panel heard that a select few officers were rude at times, even getting upset and swearing (not sure if those officers are still present). Overall, mostly positive reviews for the Police Department were heard.

Neighboring law enforcement agencies report a cordial working relationship with the PD, however, note numerous areas in which the PD could vastly improve. Many of these examples were also identified by the Panel and are discussed elsewhere in this document.

Social media has become a mainstay in community relations and has changed both the way people communicate and their expectations about how to receive vital information. The Panel surveyed the Thomaston Police Department's social media presence on Facebook and found that it is very active and has a large following (4.8k followers). The posts are relative, timely, and professional. The department does not appear to have a Twitter or Instagram account.

The department is active with raising money to support Maine Special Olympics, participating in "Tip a Cop", and "Law Enforcement Torch Run". It has also participated in the Town's annual "Trunk or Treat".

Community Relations - Recommendations:

Thomaston PD should enhance its image in the community and seek additional opportunities to be visible to citizens. Public events of nearly every type represent avenues for the police department to increase contact with citizens. The Panel recommends that a comprehensive review of all community policing activities be undertaken and a concerted effort be made to involve as many officers as possible. Resources for community policing topics, suggestions, and possible funding can be found on the Department of Justice's Community Orientated Policing Service (COPS). The COPS website can be located at: <https://cops.usdoj.gov>

During the community event on May 6th, several citizens mentioned hearing that Thomaston Officers had spent time with students at local schools and commended them. Although School Resource Officer duties are contracted with the Rockland Police Department, it is suggested that a dialog is needed between the Rockland SRO and Thomaston Police administration to create more opportunities for Thomaston Officers to be present in school environments. Given the proximity of Rockland and the Patrol areas of the Knox County Sheriff's Office, there is a high probability that all three agencies are dealing with the same individuals. It would be beneficial for Thomaston PD to open better lines of communication with Rockland PD and Knox SO to share information.

Crime Analysis

Every citizen needs to feel safe within their community and rising crime rates are always cause for alarm. The Review Panel was charged with comparing the Thomaston Police Department's crime rates, crime clearance rates, patterns, and trends with other departments of similar makeup. In most cases, it is relatively easy to find departments of similar size, population, and demographics for comparative purposes. The Panel compared the statistics which are compiled through Police agencies reporting to the Maine Department of Public Safety's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Division.

The offenses of Murder, Rape, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Theft, Motor Vehicle Theft, and Arson are used to establish an index in the Uniform Crime Reporting Program. They measure trends and distribution of crime in the United States and, more significantly, within geographic regions of contributing states such as Maine. These crimes are counted by law enforcement agencies as they become known and are reported on a monthly basis. These "index offenses" were selected as a measuring device because as a group, they represent the most common crime problems. They are all serious crimes either by their very nature or due to the volume and frequency with which they occur. The Panel feels that using the data compiled by UCR is a useful tool for this report. **Note:** These are only eight crimes, out of several hundred, that a police department may investigate and are in no way inclusive of the services a police department provides.

Crime Analysis - Findings:

A review of the statistical data indicates that the Thomaston Police Department is moderately active for its population regarding the demand for police services.

For the purposes of this review, the Panel looked at the UCR data submitted by the police department to the State of Maine Public Safety for the calendar years 2018-2024. This information was gathered from www.maine.gov/dps/cim/crime_in_maine. Statistics show that the crime rate has been inconsistent for the past seven years, however, there has been a clear rise during the past three years.

Of note, in 2021, the Federal Government required all police agencies to move away from the UCR reporting system. Instead, a much more thorough system called the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) is now being utilized. For purposes of this report for comparison purposes, the Panel only reviewed UCR data contained within the NIBRS data in years 2021-2024).

A table offering comparative analysis of crime rates, clearance rates, and staffing of Thomaston and similar municipalities is provided later in this report under *Staffing and Deployment*.

Crime Statistics for Thomaston Police Department: Maine State Public Safety

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population*	2772	2767	2741	2761	2816	2808	2761
Crime Rate	15.87	23.49	34.29	15.93	13.13	26.64	38.39
Murder / manslaughter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rape	-1	0	2	0	0	0	0
Robbery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aggravated Assault	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
Burglary	3	4	6	1	2	1	3
Larceny / Theft	40	54	77	40	33	70	97
Motor Vehicle Theft	2	7	7	2	1	1	5
Arson	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total Index Crimes	44	65	94	44	37	72	106
Clearance Rate	34.1	15.4	18.1	13.11	0	16.28	22.96
Sworn Officers	4	2	5	6	7	7	7
Officers Per 1000	1.4	.72	1.8	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.5

*Population data as reported in Maine State Public Safety “Crime in Maine”

A vast majority of any police department’s time involves responding to Calls for Service that may not rise to the level of one of the crimes listed above. These Calls for Service relate to quality-of-life complaints such as disturbances or traffic complaints. A more detailed analysis is covered in this document under “Workload”.

Crime Analysis - Recommendations:

The crime analysis data should be examined by administrative and patrol level staff. By looking at crime data, staff can consider areas to place emphasis on or employing various crime diversion programs. Keeping current on the latest crime trends lends itself to efficient and effective law enforcement and crime prevention.

The Interim Chief submits statistics to the State of Maine Department of Public Safety, which is a task better suited for an office assistant.

While there are many factors involved in a successful clearance rate, a careful and continual analysis of crimes committed can provide useful information and have a positive impact.

Record Keeping and Information Technology

The ability to compile, retrieve, analyze, and manipulate information is invaluable to a police department. Information storage and retrieval is paramount to a department being able to set short and long-term goals, assess its effectiveness, and provide a professional level of service.

There is a direct relationship between a department's efficiency and the quality of its records and record keeping procedures. Every police administrator is called upon to make decisions relating to the distribution of his/her workforce, the expenditure of funds, and the revision of plans of operations in response to changing crime conditions. Much of the information necessary to arrive at sound decisions may be gleaned from administrative records or reports that give a picture of present conditions and problems faced by the department.

In addition to paper records, police departments everywhere rely heavily on information technology (the use of computers and telecommunications systems for storing, retrieving, and sending information) to perform their jobs. The hardware, software, and policies and procedures related to their use are crucial to ensure the security of sensitive information where it is entered, stored, and transmitted beyond the department's walls. Malicious penetration of these systems for the theft of information or to hold the municipality's information for ransom can cripple operations, result in huge monetary loss to the town, professionally embarrass the organization, and expose those whose records are compromised to identity theft.

Record Keeping and Information Technology - Findings:

Thomaston PD generated 6,076 Calls for Service in 2024. This number includes all calls requiring a police response, as well as officer-initiated actions such as traffic stops, field interviews, property checks, etc. Each of these calls required documentation at some level.

Thomaston PD uses a record management system called Spillman Flex to enter, store, and access all police records. This database is also used by, and interfaces with, the Knox County Sheriff's Department and the Knox County Communications Center. A part-time office assistant assists with various department records and paperwork. Paper records are kept in file cabinets on site.

Each individual officer is responsible for submitting their own paperwork to the District Attorney's Office by way of "ShareFile", a digital portal between the DA and the PD.

A most recent audit of the Thomaston Police Department's security of Criminal Justice Information by the Maine State Police's Access Integrity Unit showed that the department has several small issues to resolve. The issues left to remedy surround minor paperwork and non-executed agreements.

When asked for various documents, staff struggled to find the documents and would routinely look in different file cabinets, binders, or on multiple workstations. There is a strong disconnect between what should or should not be kept for records. For instance, documentation on serial numbers and the transfer of department owned firearms is non-existent (there are files on current firearms).

Transparency with the public in modern policing is essential for any police department to be effective and ensure public trust. It is essential to have a system where a citizen's concerns about perceived officer misconduct are properly documented and, more importantly, investigated. When asked how complaints about personnel were handled, the Panel was told that the Sergeant or Chief would generally talk to the complainant. There are no Complaint Forms available for citizens wanting to make a complaint. It should be noted that within TPD's Policy A-2 (Complaints Against Personnel), a "Complaint Form" is referenced, however none appear to be existent.

In the 2024 yearly submission to the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, the department noted that there was one complaint of excessive force which was classified as "unfounded". The incident was handled informally; no official investigation or record of complaint is on file for review.

As explained elsewhere in this report, there is no documentation that two current officers have acknowledged receiving and reviewing any of the department's policies.

There is no documentation on whether there was training on Tire Deflation Systems, Automated External Defibrillators in cruisers, or yearly recommended Taser re-certifications.

Employee evaluations appear to have not been done for (at least) three years, although the department's Performance Evaluation Policy (A-6) requires them to be done either every six months or annually, depending on the decision of the Chief.

The department has a Public Access to Records Policy (A-5), however no department employee has had any training on Maine's Freedom of Access Act (FOAA). The Panel was told that more complex requests are sent to the Town Manager's Office, however when it came to police reports, as long as cases were no longer active, anyone who requested a police report would receive it. No evidence of proper redaction of confidential information was verified and no log was available for review. Furthermore, staff were unaware of statutory time restrictions as related to requests for information from the public.

The department utilizes private Information Technology (IT) support funded by the Town. As IT related issues arise, the Interim Chief contacts IT to have issues resolved.

As mentioned elsewhere in this document, the department Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) are outdated and are failing to a high degree.

Record Keeping and Information Technology - Recommendations:

Proper record keeping is an area that is crucial in modern police departments to protect both the officer and the municipality from civil litigation. Emphasis needs to be placed on “what” and “where” crucial documents are being kept. More importantly, “who” is going to follow-up to ensure this is being done.

Software specifically designed for proper law enforcement record keeping should be purchased to address the issue of inconsistent record keeping.

Citizen Complaint Forms need to be created and available to the public upon request. In addition, a system that documents receipt of the complaint, as well as a procedure in which citizens are notified of a matter’s conclusion - adhering to State personnel laws, should be implemented.

Employee evaluations should be conducted as outlined by TPD’s policy (A-6).

The Panel strongly recommends staff adhere to Thomaston PD’s Public Access to Records Policy (A-5). Doing so, as well as attending training, will alleviate the risk of personal identifying information being provided to the public and limit potential liability. Also, clear guidance on what request is fulfilled by the police department as opposed to the Town Manager’s Office should be made to PD personnel.

The Panel recommends updating the MDTs immediately. Today’s officer relies on MDTs to do most patrol related tasks including writing reports. Being unable to do so causes officers to have to return to the station, thus removing them from Patrol.

Department Communications

Ensuring effective communication within a police department is one of the most critical – and potentially most difficult – tasks for an administrator. Inefficient communication can lead to vital information being missed and an increase of rumors or inaccurate information.

As if these factors weren’t enough, police administrators must keep in mind that frequently the information communicated can have serious safety and legal implications if messages are not properly sent, received, and acknowledged.

Department Communications - Findings:

Officers utilize Spillman for case review. All reports are sent to the current Interim Chief of Police for approval.

Given the relatively small number of officers employed, combined with the fact officers are only on duty for two days a week, department email and text threads are used to communicate between employees. This seems to work fine as little to no communication is missed between department members.

In a small department, the chain of command is hard to adhere to for issues that need immediate attention. The Chief and Sergeant appear to be synonymous.

The Interim Chief of Police held the position of Sergeant prior to his interim promotion, however no Interim Sergeant was implemented. Therefore, all issues are brought directly to the Interim Chief to address.

The Interim Chief of Police is extremely accommodating and constantly doing whatever he can to keep the agency moving forward.

Department Communications - Recommendations:

The Panel does not see the reason to change the way in which officers communicate with each other. The method of emails and texts seem to be working fine.

Given the current work schedule, an annual meeting of all staff to discuss goals for the upcoming year, including budget preparation and resource or equipment acquisition, is suggested.

DISPATCH

The communications center is the hub of the police department and in order to remain efficient both in productivity and officer safety, it must be able to accomplish routine tasks with ease. Most importantly, Communication Officers must communicate with on-duty police officials and the public in a professional, informative, calm, and understanding manner.

Dispatch - Findings:

The Knox Regional Communications Center (KRCC) provides dispatch services for Thomaston PD's public safety departments to include both Police and Fire Departments. The Center is a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) and has a minimum of two dispatchers and a supervisor working at all times. KRCC dispatches for a total of five law enforcement agencies, 18 fire departments, and 12 Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agencies. Thomaston PD has a dedicated radio frequency and allows other agencies to monitor their channel. Thomaston pays approximately \$78,000 for dispatch services to include police, fire, and EMS. Approximately \$22,500 of that fee is for police dispatch.

KRCC generates Calls for Service for law enforcement complaints. Officers are responsible for verifying information and making sure all information is complete. The department's Mobile

Data Terminals, or cruiser computers, are out of date with not enough RAM and are failing. Officers are constantly having issues with MDTs not being reliable and even shutting down.

There are several areas in town (Main Street and Fish Street) where radio coverage is sub-par. In talking with staff, these areas have always been an issue. When asked if anyone knew why, or if a solution was ever discussed, nobody knew.

Thomaston PD does not have a representative for the KRCC user group which consists of all “end users” and meets at regular intervals.

Dispatch - Recommendations:

A member of Thomaston PD should be assigned to attend the KRCC user group. This would open two-way communication and allow for the department’s needs to be conveyed.

The poor radio coverage on Main Street and Fish Street should be examined to see if a solution is possible or feasible. With officers routinely working alone, the inability to communicate with dispatch is a personnel, as well as public safety, issue.

PATROL SERVICES

Patrol services are the fundamental function of every law enforcement agency. The defining characteristic of an American law enforcement agency is its ability to dispatch an officer to a scene to stop a crime, mediate a dispute, take a report, or one of the nearly infinite tasks expected of them. Modern day requirements for law enforcement officers can be overwhelming. Leadership within the administration, town government, and community must be sensitive to the fact they are managing humans, who make mistakes. Today’s police officers are required to make split second decisions with mental health calls, critical incidents, deadly force applications, and motor vehicle crashes, all while - unlike any other time in law enforcement - these decisions are captured on cameras. As we see daily, these split-second decisions are scrutinized in the media, police administration, and public, generally without any formal review or process. Police administrations and town leadership must be sensitive to these rapid public reviews and support their officers during stressful periods until all facts are investigated.

The demands and stress of the law enforcement are obstacles to recruitment and retention with the new generation of police officer candidates. New candidates are seeking balance, competitive wages, time off, growth opportunities, community policing, equipment, professional environment, and support. If communities such as Thomaston wish to maintain and attract valued candidates, they should be aware that they are competing in an aggressive Maine Police market. Police and town leadership need to invest with competitive wages, schedule flexibility, enticements (Special Assignments), support, and be fluid while informed to the regional law enforcement market surrounding their community with municipal, state, and county law enforcement all striving to attract and retain from the same candidate pool.

Workload

Workload for the Patrol Division can be a difficult metric to define. Optimally, officers would devote 100% of their time to productive pursuit: handling calls, stopping cars, completing reports, etc. One of these productive pursuits, however, is often referred to as “proactive patrol” and refers to the officer’s travel throughout their patrol sector.

Workload-Findings:

Proactive patrol is difficult to measure. However, upon reviewing the 2024 call volume for the Thomaston Police Department, the Panel found well documented (see Exhibit A) and detailed analysis of their Call for Services. This detailed analysis allows community members and police administration to clearly understand the direction of police services in their community and address emerging trends.

The Thomaston Police Department handled the following call volume in 2024:

- Traffic Stops: 884
- Calls for Service: 5192

Calls for Service are well documented by Thomaston PD, with reports providing details to approximately 123 types of call classifications.

Traffic issues are generally the number one complaint for communities of this size. While visiting Thomaston, and talking with residents and town officials, this was generally the first item discussed in great length. The increased traffic volume and speed complaints were mentioned several times, with most people recognizing the restrictions of limited staff, while still seeking more attention to these “quality-of-life” concerns.

It should be noted that Walmart Supercenter consumed approximately 10% of the entire call volume, which is common with these types of stores in communities with major customer traffic. Some of the most time-consuming Calls for Service are Thefts, Vehicle Crashes, Assaults, and Medical Responses. The Panel interviewed leadership and staff representatives from Walmart who indicated the officers and leadership of the Police Department were attentive and proactive with their response. During the visit, the Panel encountered a Thomaston Police Officer proactively checking the store and making himself visible and available to the general public and store staff.

Calls for Service have risen consistently over the past four years while traffic enforcement remains fairly consistent.

Year	Traffic Stops	Calls For Service
2021	870	3719
2022	840	3175
2023	808	4160
2024	884	5192

A closer look into specific Calls for Services noted a substantial increase in police responses in relation to “Thefts”. Theft investigations can be very time-consuming, thereby removing officers from routine patrol.

Year	Thefts
2021	57
2022	80
2023	141
2024	173

Workload Recommendation:

Call volume is consistent with a community of this size and structure. The business district is impressive for a small community with limited police services. Having Lowes, Walmart, various restaurants, and a chain hotel within the community are all potential drains for police services. Calls for Service such as Thefts, Disturbances, Vehicle Crashes, and Medical Calls generally require a two-officer minimum response. These stores are regionally and nationally targeted by professional theft groups working in teams and coordinating their criminal activity. Staffing for police services within this business district should be part of the best practice standards with a two-officer minimum for high-risk incidents. The Panel recognizes the current staffing challenges, but increasing staffing to support the business growth of the community is recommended and *may* be supported with Tax Increment Financing (TIF), if adopted by the Town.

Staffing and Deployment

It is imperative that a department ensures their officers are deployed in a way that is not only fair and complies with any collective bargaining agreement, but in a way that provides adequate coverage for the Town and promotes officer safety. The balance of having an appropriate number of officers to respond to Calls for Service is critical to maintain control of the scene, reduce Use of Force incidents, and ensures officer safety while promoting complete and thorough investigations.

Staffing and Deployment - Findings:

The Thomaston Police Department maintains 24-hour coverage of a community of 2,767 citizens. Patrol coverage is as follows.

- (1) Chief
- (1) Sergeant
- (5) Patrol Officers
- (1) Part-time “Reserve” Patrol Officer
- (1) Part-time “Traffic Enforcement” Officer
- (1) Part-time administrative position

There is no detective for this department, however regional assistance is available through the Knox County Sheriff’s Office.

There is no School Resource Officer, however the school district contracts regional coverage with the Rockland Police Department.

To the Panel’s knowledge, the patrol schedule is unique and not observed in any other departments within the State. The schedule requires 48-hours on, five days off. Officers are paid for 36 hours with the remaining 12 hours considered “on call” and allow for sleeping in modified quarters within the department. The Department needs to utilize seven officers to cover the 24/7 schedule.

2025 Comparative Police Staffing and 2023 Crime Rate Data

Police Department	Sworn Officers	Population	Officers per 1000	Crime Rate	Total Index Crimes	Clearance Rate
Thomaston	7	2,767	2.5	31.08*	86	16.28
Wiscasset	6	3,742	1.6	33.67	126	32.5
Waldoboro	8	5,154	1.5	18.38	94	46.81
Rockland	19	8,520	2.2	30.63	261	12.26
Camden	10	3,665	2.7	2.72	10	10
Richmond	3	3,598	.8	3.33	12	0
Rockport	6	3,740	1.6	21.92	82	34.15
Maine Avg	2378	1,400,000	1.7	29.65		

*2024 Crime Rate only available for Thomaston PD

According to published UCR reports, the ratio of officers per 1000, averages 1.9 for urban jurisdictions and 1.4 for rural jurisdictions. Currently the Thomaston Police Department has seven full-time sworn officers. The current Thomaston Officer per 1000 population is 2.5.

The term “full-time sworn” officer does not mean that these personnel are performing regular police enforcement duties in investigations, patrol and deterrent practices. Caution should be exercised in using rates for comparative purposes, since a wide variety of factors dictate the number of employees necessary for various law enforcement agencies. The need for regulatory, correction, administrative, and assigned special duties affects the number of personnel available for regular law enforcement responsibilities.

Staffing and Deployment – Recommendations:

Thomaston maintains a small, rural community unique with a robust business district and chain hotel, attracting large populations with increasing call volume and critical incidents needing at least two officers. Evaluating two officer assignments within the call reporting matrix is recommended for future staffing and growth challenges.

The Panel recommends that the department – now, and as an occasional practice moving forward - conduct a deep-dive into the distribution of Calls for Service across days of the week to determine if modifications to current schedules are appropriate to enhance coverage during busier times of the day and days of the week.

When interviewing staff members for the department, the patrol schedule was an instrumental attraction for officers seeking employment at the Thomaston Police Department. The Panel is concerned with officers routinely working extended periods of time beyond 12 hours. Unlike any other profession, critical decisions and deadly force applications can happen at any moment in law enforcement. Having an Officer that theoretically could be working 36 hours straight is dangerous and potentially liable for the community. Additionally, the Panel heard from several citizens who expressed frustration with not being able to get in touch with officers for five days at a time. This was in response to citizens wanting to ask a question or provide additional information to a specific officer for a specific case.

The Thomaston Police Department is recognized in their approach in balancing a shortage of police candidates in Maine and being creative like no other law enforcement agency in the State. The Panel sensed during interviews, that any modifications in the patrol schedule could create further openings as some may seek other employment opportunities elsewhere.

Supervision

Supervisors are instrumental at all phases of police operations to maintain policies and best practices within the vision of the department and leadership. The Thomaston Police Department is limited to a Patrol Sergeant that serves as second in command and Police Chief (currently vacant). For administrators, having faith in a Patrol Sergeant to reliably execute the properly defined and communicated direction of the Chief is invaluable. As risk managers, a Sergeant's number one duty is to, without fail, maintain knowledge of the department's policies and procedures and ensure that the officers in his or her care religiously follow them. Without strong, committed middle managers to facilitate consistent communication up and down the chain-of-command, the chain is weak and bound to break.

Supervision – Findings:

Supervising in a modern-day law enforcement organization is essential to continuing community trust and respect, limit liability, and provide a safe and accountable work environment.

The Patrol Division has one Patrol Sergeant and one Police Chief overseeing operations. During the time of the Panel's review, the Patrol Sergeant was taken from rotation and placed as the Interim Chief of Police. The Panel's understanding the prior Police Chief was working a modified schedule, limiting exposure to town officials and staff. With limited leadership and managing a unique schedule, supervision with two individuals (Sergeant, Chief) should encompass community and staff availability Monday-Friday, with weekend coverage serving as on-call status. It is essential for the Chief and Sergeant to share duties and maintain, as best as possible, high visibility within the department and the community. The Panel commends and applauds the Interim Police Chief for wearing two hats and serving all areas of police services with patrol, administrative duties, and community outreach. This strain is identified in several areas within the police organization. As a result, the agency has suffered critical oversight as identified in several locations within this report.

Supervision – Recommendations:

Regular leadership team meetings will help with improved communication, consistency of treatment of officers, and the minimization of gossip.

A system for tracking minor supervisory actions by the Chief and Sergeant will help ensure consistency and fairness within the organization. Developing a system for proper documentation of performance issues will ensure all employees receive consistent treatment.

The Panel highly recommends that the Police Chief's schedule should be Mon-Fri, with flexibility, so he/she can have touch points with staff, town government, and community members. Having a supervisor's (Police Chief/Sergeant) presence within the department and operating in a high visibility format instills policy compliance, critical incident review, and access.

Training will be addressed in a following section of this report; however, members of the leadership team should engage in occasional and ongoing professional development. Anyone can become stagnant or complacent, however networking with other supervisors can help recharge one's batteries and enthusiasm.

Arrests: Processing and Transport

The act of arresting a person results in restricting their free movement, searching them, and physically removing them from their location. This law enforcement function, with good reason, carries a tremendous amount of liability along with it. Arrests should be made judiciously, but without hesitation when necessary.

Arrests: Processing and Transport – Findings:

The Thomaston Police Department averages 10-15 physical arrests a year. These arrests are transported to Knox County Jail, approximately 20 minutes from the community. The police station is modified from an old school and does not have a proper facility to secure a prisoner that is safe for the officer, other staff, or detainee.

The Thomaston Police Department has three vehicles assigned to the department. As addressed in other parts of this report, only one vehicle has a prisoner transport system (safety cage). No transport of passengers or arrestees should be authorized in a town vehicle without a safety cage. Priority measures from this report highly recommend a plan to have all three vehicles with safety cages. If the vehicle with the only safety cage is out of service for maintenance or other issues, there is no other vehicle to safely transport prisoners, creating officer safety concerns and liability exposures.

Arrests: Processing and Transport – Recommendations:

To the extent possible, safety of the officers should be a priority and instances of officers being by themselves while managing an arrestee should be minimized. The Panel recognizes the limited staff but strongly encourages two officers to be present when making an arrest. Additionally, transporting prisoners within a safety cage is recommended.

Use of Force

The Maine Criminal Justice Academy teaches new recruits that “law enforcement is under a microscope”. They learn early on that their every move is watched, scrutinized, and judged by the public. Nowhere is this more accurate than the rare instances when officers must use physical force against a fellow citizen.

Law enforcement officers are empowered by State statute to use non-deadly force in the defense of themselves or a third person against non-deadly force or to effect the arrest of a criminal suspect. Officers are empowered to use deadly force in defense of themselves or a third person against deadly force, or to affect the arrest of a person when the person has committed a crime involving deadly force and is likely to endanger human life unless apprehended without delay. Luckily, the vast majority of police officers serve their entire career without being required to use deadly force.

A great deal of department resources are focused on the procurement, maintenance, and training for proficiency in the tools used to deliver force: pain compliance tools like pepper spray and impact weapons, neuro-muscular incapacitation weapons like electronic control devices (frequently referred to as TASERS), and deadly weapons such as firearms.

Use of Force Reports are instrumental to all agencies in identifying trends.

Use of Force – Findings:

Situational Use of Force is a statutorily mandated policy and therefore, the Board of Trustees of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy has established nine individual minimum standards which must be contained in each law enforcement agency's policy. A review of Thomaston Police Department's Use of Force Policy revealed that it is properly updated and contains the minimum standards.

Any officer who uses physical force is required to complete a Use of Force Report which is separate from other reports, as outlined in Thomaston PD's Use of Force Policy (O-2). All Use of Force Reports are to be maintained in a secure location.

Use of force application is a high liability component for Law Enforcement and therefore proper documentation is critical. The Review Panel did not find any documentation of any Use of Force Report ever completed or filed. This would indicate officers of the department have never deployed less lethal tactics, displayed their firearm toward an individual for compliance, or utilized an elevated amount of force to effect an arrest (compliance hold).

When asked about this, the Panel was told there were no such reports, as they have never been completed. Moreover, staff was unaware of the "Use of Force Report" located in the Appendix of the Department's Use of Force Policy (O-2). It should be noted that since bringing this to the attention of the Interim Chief, it was remedied immediately.

As mentioned prior in this report under Record Keeping, in the 2024 yearly submission to the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, the Department noted that there was one complaint of excessive force which was classified as "unfounded". The incident was handled informally; no official investigation or record of complaint is on file for review.

Use of Force – Recommendations:

The Panel suggests staff revisit any use of force incident they were involved in over the past 12 months and complete the Use of Force Report to the best of their ability, noting that the report is being done so after the fact.

School Resource Officer

According to the US Department of Justice, School Resource Officers (SROs) are sworn law enforcement officers responsible for safety and crime prevention in schools. A local department typically employs SROs who work closely with a school's administrators in an effort to create a safer environment. The responsibilities of SROs are similar to regular police officers in that they have the ability to make arrests, respond to Calls for Service, and document incidents that occur within their jurisdiction. Beyond law enforcement, SROs also serve as educators, emergency managers, and informal counselors. While an SRO's primary responsibility is law enforcement, whenever possible, SROs should strive to employ non-punitive techniques when

interacting with students. Arrests should be used only as a last resort under specified circumstances.

School Resource Officers are instrumental in serving the needs of the students, staff, physical security, threat assessment, mentoring, and representing the department in a positive light. These officers should be vetted and selected by the highest standards within the organization.

School Resource Officer – Findings:

The Thomaston Police Department does not deploy a full-time officer to the schools. This service is supported and funded by RSU-13. Rockland Police Department is contracted to provide these services.

School Resource Officer – Recommendations:

The Thomaston Police Department visited the schools 43 times in 2024, according to the call volume report provided to the Review Panel. These visits were intended to support the visiting SRO, provide visibility and support the school. The officers interviewed were very supportive of the schools and understood the importance of being vigilant during operating hours and present during school hours.

Department leadership, working with school administrators, should seek regular opportunities to engage with students on campus. There are many school events where the simple presence and enthusiasm of officers can amplify the relationships. As an example, any time a planned fire drill or unplanned fire alarm occur, the Thomaston Police officers should be on site to observe and provide security as large numbers of children move from place to place.

Police departments across the state and country need to be hypervigilant with school operations. Every police department with a school in their community, no matter the size, needs to take measures to ensure rapid reporting of incidents, streamline responses, knowledge of school layout, staffing and student populations, vulnerabilities, and implementing best practices in school responses and engagement. This recommended approach requires yearly training, communication with Rockland PD, leadership, documentation, and coordination with schools.

INVESTIGATIONS

The Thomaston Police Department's response to crime and its success in investigating criminal activity is critical in judging the agency's ability to respond to community demands. Additionally, the professional pride that comes with successfully investigating and suppressing crime is invaluable to everyone affiliated with the law enforcement agency.

The investigation of serious crimes often requires the acquisition of special training. Complex investigations can take long periods of time – often measured in months – to complete. The

mobile nature of our society means that in many cases, crimes stretch beyond the boundaries of one law enforcement agency's jurisdiction. Processing crime scenes and thoroughly examining today's digital evidence is very time consuming. Generally, every home, person, and business has some form of video. If given the proper time, today's law enforcement professionals can dive deep into any incident and find key components which could identify the culprit, it's just providing the resources and training. Victims, witnesses, and suspects often live beyond town lines and investigators must travel to interview them. Serious criminal investigations generally require a single point of contact. Federal agents, sexual assault advocates, and children forensic interviewers need to know and to form relationships with investigators. For these reasons, when feasible, the delegation of criminal investigations to a detective (or detectives) makes sense.

Investigation – Findings:

Thomaston Police Department does not have an assigned detective. Follow up investigations are with the investigating officer(s) are passed through to the police chief and patrol sergeant, depending on the severity of the incident. The current patrol schedule is not indicative to aid with follow-up investigations. Currently, officers are working 36 hours straight (two days). With no assigned detective, officers are generally not able to manage an incident themselves in a timely manner because they are off for several days. The schedule as noted within this report is a primary attraction to the department, but the potential consequence of the schedule is follow-up investigations as the officers are off-duty for five days at a time.

According to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) which is the federal agency collecting all crime data, the Thomaston Police Department in 2023 reported 83 offences classified as reportable crimes, with 14 cases cleared, or a clearance rate of 16%. In Maine, the average clearance rate for 2023 was 42.8%. This is considered a low clearance rate but indicative of a small department that is short staffed with leadership multitasking and trying to maintain all state, local, and regional requirements.

The department is outfitted with an interview room which is properly wired for audio and visual recording. There is an ample evidence storage area, which will be discussed later in this report.

Investigations – Recommendations:

The Review Panel found the schedule impactful to follow up investigations. Crime rates are generally low, but the business district is demanding to police services, particularly follow-up investigations with thefts, drugs investigations, and the time to review digital evidence. A review of each criminal case reported by the Chief of Police or designee is recommended to formulate a best pathway forward in overtime or other means to make sure each case is thoroughly investigated to its fullest means.

Property and Evidence Management

A department's professionalism could well be measured by how closely its handling of property and evidence meets industry best practices. The care and preservation of physical property – whether it is evidence in a criminal proceeding or not – is a department function which if not executed properly, could expose the department to civil liability, lost prosecution, and professional embarrassment. It is easy for a defense attorney to successfully attack a shoddy chain-of-custody and evidence storage integrity issues in a criminal case. In addition, some items which are routinely stored by police departments and, if not handled properly, can degrade and result in mold which can result in serious health conditions.

Property and Evidence Management – Findings:

The Thomaston Police Department is equipped with a modern pass-through evidence system. With this system, officers are able to package seized evidence or property and place it in a small locker. Once the locker is locked, the property is inaccessible to any individual who does not have access to the interior of the evidence room. The Chief of Police or Sergeant manages the property and evidence function. He/she is responsible for entering the evidence room, removing items from temporary storage, and placing them on permanent storage shelves. So long as access to this room is properly restricted, a strong and court-defensible chain-of-custody is established. As documented above, the Department has policies regarding guiding officers in this area.

During the Review Panel's tour of the facility, it was noted that the evidence storage area, which is being recorded and stored for approximately 30 days, was appropriate in size for the department, clean, neat, and under the view of a camera. The items in the current evidence storage area appeared current and relevant to existing cases.

The Review Panel did note an unlocked temporary storage door, exposed to all in the police station with property labeled as "possible human remains/femur". When confronted about this, an officer stated it was be animal remains. Additionally, there were several bags of evidence, one being possible drugs. Also, there was un-tagged/documented personal property in an unlocked temporary storage locker. When confronted about the personal property, an officer remarked the items had been in there for nearly a year and was not sure of the day/time of recovery.



Pass-through evidence storage



Evidence storage (New)

Property and Evidence Management – Findings (Secondary Storage)

The Review Panel was directed to a common storage area located in the basement of the building. The police station is an annex of an old school and attached to the police station is a portion serving as the Town Hall. The storage area in question is accessed by an unlocked metal door in a common hallway accessible by the public. The storage area shares a space for town seasonal storage items and miscellaneous items. The entry into the police storage area was through an unlocked door labeled "Police". Inside the room it appeared to contain the storage of years of evidence, case files, and presumably very sensitive information, evidence, potential weapons or drugs. When asked by the Review Panel if weapons or drugs could be stored in this room, the Interim Police Chief indicated that it was a possibility. The handing of the boxes of evidence and case files to this area was managed by prisoners on a work release assignment. This was not confirmed, and it is unclear when the transition of property occurred.





Access to evidence storage (Old)



Evidence storage and old case files

Property and Evidence Management – Findings (Third Storage Area)

The Review Panel was also taken to a locked room annexing the main area of the police station. This room was noted as general storage, but during inspection, property was located that had evidence notifications attached.



Evidence and equipment storage

Property and Evidence Management – Recommendations:

The Review Panel noted the evidence storage, management, processing, auditing, and security to be the topmost critical item of concern. It is clear to the Review Panel this component of operation was years in the making, meaning past practice and poor oversight contributed to the final findings.

This is a time-consuming task to rectify and understanding the ramifications of this lapse in proper police management of evidence retention is unknown, based on the unsecure accessibility and internal institutional knowledge of the handling of these boxes.

The Review Panel recommends a strategic and immediate plan to secure the area, review each box of evidence, each case file, and purge materials according to the standards of the State of Maine record retention requirements. Police evidence can be reviewed according to the incident, based on best practices outlined in policy, and The Maine Law Enforcement Accreditation Program (MLEAP).

An existing officer(s) interested in evidencing processing, who would receive formal training and compensation, could take this task on during the overnight or when not busy. This will take

substantial time, but it is critical in moving the agency forward and maintaining trust from the community.

FACILITIES

The Thomaston Police Department is established in an annex of an old school, which also houses Thomaston Town Hall. The building location and accommodations are indicative of a small-town police department. The Police Department maintains modern features including video surveillance and controlled access. Understandably, the features of a school are different than the needs of a police department. The approach to a police department from a citizen or a victim requiring services should instill confidence and capability. These features are generated by the cleanness of the building, lighting, signage, and pride of the organization, no matter the size and financial limitations of the community.

Facilities - Findings:

The entrance was well lit, noting the department's name and a blue light out front, displaying a universal visual cue of a police station. The Review Panel does recommend moving one of the three parking spaces for the police cruisers towards the eastern corner of the building. This would allow a clear view of the entrance for the public and deter walking past the cruiser potential viewing sensitive equipment, weapon systems, and restrictive criminal justice information.

The staff and leadership make good use of limited space and unique configurations of offices, classroom, hallways, and other designs not configured for a police department. The equipment was modern, with video surveillance of key areas and ergonomic workstations for most employees. Because of the work schedule, housing accommodations are appropriate with restrictive policies governing visitation and authorized personnel.





Officers desk and equipment storage

Facilities – Recommendations:

The primary challenge with most modern-day police departments is maintaining a complement of equipment to support the many functions of police operations. Having limited space to conduct these operations means leadership needs to be creative, organized, disciplined, and able to prioritize the mission of the department. The layout of the police department with various storage areas promotes the “out of sight, out of mind” approach. If leadership was walking past these areas each day, these would be treated similar to the common areas of the department.

The organization and cleanliness of the department can be improved with limited financial impact. Organization of every area of the department transcends into uniforms, cruisers, public image, recruitment, and department professionalism. This starts with the Chief of Police, directing and demanding accountability to maintain police department equipment and work areas to the highest degree possible.

As outlined within this report in regard to evidence storage, there is an opportunity to vastly improve the cleanliness and organization of all aspects of the department. The Review Panel recommends the Town invest in supporting these measures from the recommendations of the Chief of Police.



Sleeping area

EQUIPMENT

The patrol division is the most important component of any police agency, and the equipment that the agency provides to the officers is indicative of the municipality's commitment and is vital to the officers' ability to perform their jobs. Today's police cruisers are instruments of technology which contain advanced weapon systems, cameras, radar units, and mobile computers, providing maximum safety for the officers. These vehicles and the equipment maintained within them are one of the first indicators of a professional workforce that the public observes every day. Cruisers are mobile billboards, interim as recruitment tools. They are essential in maintaining morale for the officers, as they must feel confident with current technology and trends compared with other local law enforcement agencies and national standards. They must be comfortable.

Although it may appear that law enforcement equipment has a relatively short useful life, it is important to remember that much of the equipment is often used in a difficult or even hostile environment. Additionally, multiple officers during a workweek use much of the equipment. Regardless, the Town must consider those capital items which support their officers as emergency equipment that must be replaced or repaired on schedule.

In addition to cruisers and the myriad of technology and equipment mounted within, a typical department's equipment also includes station computers, firearms, less-lethal (pepper spray, TASER, batons), body worn cameras, and more.

Equipment - Findings:

Presently, the Thomaston Police Department has three vehicles in their inventory.

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILEAGE	ASSIGNMENT
2025	Ford	Explorer	9000	Patrol
2021	Ford	Mustang (EV)	30,000	Patrol
2024	Ford	Bronco	4000	Chief

The police department maintains two primary emergency vehicles for patrol operations, one being an electric vehicle. The Ford Bronco is assigned to the Chief of Police. The vehicles are in good working order, have low mileage, and are well maintained. The Interim Chief of Police is very talented, generally maintains and installs emergency equipment, and alters uniforms for the department.

Patrol Rifles: Two cruisers are outfitted with a patrol rifle, located next to the driver with quick and easy access. The weapon system appeared new, containing the latest in magazine capacity and optics.

Mobile Data Terminals (cruiser computers): Two cruisers contain laptops and are failing.

Exterior Vest: The exterior vest the officers wear is designed to distribute the weight from around the waste to the upper portions of the body. This is designed to reduce the medical claims to the lower back that generally occur after years of service of wearing the weighted duty belt. The average duty belt and vest weight is 25-30 lbs. The law enforcement profession transitioned to these vests starting several years ago across the country as police officers were required to carry more equipment to meet additional requirements. The modern-day police officer in Maine carries an option of less-lethal (mace, taser, impact weapon), duty ammo, rifle ammo, radio, body camera, handcuffs, badge, flashlight, medical supplies, tourniquet, Naloxone (treatment for overdoses), and body armor with additional protection (shock plates). The exterior vest allows officers to quickly disrobe in case of a water emergency or provide a brief reprieve while on break. The members of the Thomaston Police wear an exterior vest, and the equipment appears to be modern and well maintained.



Body Camera: The Thomaston Police Department currently utilizes the Axon body camera and Taser 7 bundle through Axon Enterprises. This started in 2023, and a five-year contract was signed running through October 2027. The department has four Axon body cameras and four Taser 7's. The department has a comprehensive policy addressing the proper use and maintenance of the Axon camera system (0-33).

Cruiser Equipment: The vehicles appear to be carrying all prudent equipment required for front-line officers to perform various duties. However, only one vehicle was equipped with a tire deflation device (spike mat) and further investigation showed officers had not received training on their proper use.

Cruiser Set-Up: The Panel was told during its review that Interim Chief of Police installs various components for a new vehicle. This includes emergency lights, cages, and other elements. Some of the vehicles have exterior lightbars while others are covert. The Review Panel was told the retired Chief of Police wanted an electric vehicle, and this is why one was introduced with a level 2 charging station attached to the front of the police station.



Ford Explorer 2025



Ford Mustang (EV) 2021



Ford Bronco Sport 2024



Interior Ford Mustang



Trunk area of Ford Explorer

Equipment – Recommendations:

The Panel recommends not operating a fleet with different vehicle types. With a department as small and limited at the Thomaston Police Department, uniformity and interoperability are a must to support patrol operations. Only one vehicle is considered safe and tested for patrol operations in the fleet of three vehicles, that being the Ford Explorer. The Ford Explorer is new and properly outfitted to support the officers and in the field with a safety cage for prisoner transport, weapon system, proper emergency lighting, pursuit rated and crash tested for police operations. If this vehicle is down for service, or additional cruisers are required, this is the only vehicle with a safety cage and that is properly outfitted.

It should be noted that the Ford Mustang (EV) is low on confidence with staff because of maintenance issues and safety concerns. Both the Ford Bronco and Mustang (EV) are not built or designed for police operations.

The department should plan and strive in the coming years and budget cycle to rotate out the Ford Bronco and Ford Mustang (EV) and commit to having three of the same vehicles with similar set-ups. Officers working under stressful conditions need uniformity in the fleet,

meaning each vehicle performs and operates like the others, with similar storage, emergency lights, and operating performance related to their training at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy. Police officers were trained for one-week at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy in the operation of the Ford Explorer police cruiser.

Storage compartments in the rear area of the cruiser would assist in maintaining organization, allowing for quicker access to gear, and minimizing damage to the equipment. These storage units can be costly but are a good investment and are transferable when the cruiser is replaced.

Although the Panel applauds the skill set displayed by the Interim Chief of Police in setting up the cruisers, the teamwork displayed, and the effort to save money, it is highly recommended to contract through a professional service for complete installations. There are several contractors in and out of state that specialize in installations. These can generally cost between \$3000-\$5000 per vehicle without adding additional equipment but ensures that each vehicle is set-up in the same way with switches, controls, and equipment placement. Having the same functionality and placement will assist the officers operating under stressful conditions and maintain an organized, appealing interior. Professional installations may result in less malfunctions to equipment and minimize exposed wires and clutter. This would also afford leadership to focus on administrative duties.

The Review Panel recommends a complete review of the Axon camera deployment policy, evidence classification, storage retention, redaction capabilities, limitations, and personal assignments to each officer of the department. The Panel recognizes and applauds the department for embracing the transparency of this tool, but identified several areas that could be problematic unless addressed:

- Each officer should be assigned their own camera. There are currently four cameras and four tasers with seven budgeted staff members. Best practice is each officer is issued their own camera. Having the officers' name displayed on the imagery of the recording is desired to eliminate confusion of involvement.
- Currently, nobody in the department is trained in the redaction of sensitive information captured on video. This is critical in releasing prohibited information or protected material such as juvenile imagery, HIPPA information, and investigative or law enforcement sensitive dialog/material. At the time of the review, there has been no FOIA request for video evidence, so it's unclear how this would be managed in the department.
- A review of Axon invoices does not reflect access to redaction capabilities. This is *critical*, and such investment to the expansion of the system is essential if the department and community are committed to the emerging trend of transparent technology. This is a high liability item that requires further scrutiny on the continuance of the program with a substantial financial investment.
- Per TPD's Body Worn Camera Policy (O-33), random reviews of body camera videos are currently not being conducted by supervisory staff. The Panel highly recommends adherence to policy in order to minimize liability and identify performance issues.

PERSONNEL

Thus far, the Panel's review of the Thomaston Police Department focused on the agency's organization, the facility, the vehicles that officers drive around, and the work that TPD officers do. This section of the review will examine the most important agency ingredient of all – the people who answer the previously mentioned calls, who drive the cruisers, and who occupy the building. This report is dedicated to them and the important work they do.

Recruitment / Selection / Retention

The activities undertaken by an agency to encourage applicants for open positions, and how one or more of those applicants are then chosen to receive job offers is likely to vary little from one Maine department to the next. Once employees are hired, the ways in which they are retained will likely fall into predictable categories as well.

Small agencies typically have difficulty committing assets toward recruitment due to the infrequency of hiring – as an example, large agencies are always hiring, so it makes sense to invest in recruiting materials and media and pay for targeted advertising when necessary.

When an agency advertises for an open position, they are faced with a choice of how to conduct the hiring process. Traditionally, departments open the hiring process for applications for a set period of time and, when that time expired, they would review the applications, select those that were qualified, and begin with testing, interviews, etc. The current trend of minimal applicants, however, requires more aggressive hiring. This can be achieved by screening each application for an open position as soon as it is received so that a qualified applicant can immediately be contacted and put through the hiring process. Once an individual is made a conditional job offer, the process everywhere in Maine is fairly standard: a thorough background investigation, psychological exam, polygraph examination, and physical examination (or in the case of an individual with prior law enforcement, review of those documents from their former employer) are all important steps.

Finally, retention in most law enforcement agencies can be summarized as follows: employees who feel that they are paid well, provided with reasonable opportunities for professional development through training and specialization, equipped with adequate gear to safely do their jobs, and are valued and treated well by their employer are much more likely to stay put. When an officer resigns, an exit interview may provide insight into whether there are any internal conditions which contributed to their decision to move along. Turnover is not always an indication of an unhealthy organization; Maine officers are fairly portable due to a transferable retirement plan, and today's workforce is generally much more mobile than that of 20 years ago.

Recruitment / Selection / Retention – Recommendations:

As noted within this report, the very thing that separates the Thomaston Police Department from other police departments across the state has been highlighted as a liability. The patrol schedule with a modified schedule of 48/36 actual hours and on call for the remaining 12 hours is an instrumental attraction for the department. The Panel noted through interviews that morale was high, staff appeared to enjoy each other, although limited to working with each other. The patrol schedule remains the driver for the staff, as some live a great distance away from Thomaston. The Thomaston Police Department has a mature group of officers, most working at other police agencies and seeking Thomaston because of the schedule, change of pace, and the enjoyment of working independently most of their shift.

Retention is high because of the schedule and the support they experience, as noted with the community event for public comment. It was clear to the Panel that evening that both the public and police officers are invested in each other's interest and concerns with moving the department forward.

Financial investment into competitive wages, professional standards, accountability, public relations, advancement opportunities, specialties are all challenges the town and police department leadership needs to embrace each day. Today's leaders can no longer manage from afar, he/she needs to be creative with their recruitment methods, understand the regional competition, and determine the future of the department. Managing small rural police departments is difficult, with limited funding and resources. If communities decide to maintain their police department, retaining the most valuable resource, which is personnel must be at forefront. A good rule of measurement is "Do you want a below average, average or above average police officer protecting your community?". If you want an above average police officer, as most do, you need to review this same approach reflective of the compensation, facilities, equipment, and leadership of the organization.

Promotions

Due to the pyramid shape of the traditional law enforcement organization, promotional opportunities may be uncommon, and statistically most police officers never achieve rank. Due to the huge amount of liability that front-line supervisors, seconds-in-command and Chiefs are required to minimize and manage, these processes are hugely important and may be among the most momentous decisions made by a unit of government.

Promotions – Findings:

Promotions are limited because of the size and structure of the department. Currently, the Chief of Police position is open with the Patrol Sergeant managing the responsibilities and displaying interest in the Chief position.

Promotions – Recommendations:

The opportunity for promotion and selecting an individual should be comprehensive, fair, and outlined in policy. The Chief of Police has the ability to train and project the future leadership opportunities with his/her department. Developing a succession plan for the department is the fundamental requirement of a good leader, putting the needs of the community and department over everything else. The development of good leaders starts with the hiring process, recognizing potential, and immediately starting the investment process with training, performance appraisals, and various contacts throughout their career to encourage and develop the department's future leaders.

Formal written testing through accredited establishments, separate from the Chief's review, interviews, and community input on candidates seeking promotion is highly recommended to maintain transparency and community involvement.

"Good investment in your people" has always been the best recruitment and retention tool.

Morale

Morale is an unpredictable thing. One toxic group member can have an outsized effect on morale. Pay is frequently considered a top contributor to high morale, and recent studies have suggested that this may be true. They also suggest that study respondents generally need to receive \$100,000 or greater per year before the majority report that their pay creates job satisfaction. Lastly, agencies must remember that regardless of pay, benefits, and work environment, some employees are simply harder to keep happy than others.

Morale – Findings:

The majority of line officers the Panel interviewed identified department morale as very good. The overwhelming reasons given for their level of morale were the patrol schedule and community support.

Morale – Recommendations:

The Panel recognizes the good morale of the department and how the schedule is a key component for maintaining good morale moving forward. Other key areas identified in this report can be addressed to enhance, maintain, and promote good morale.

- Clean and organize the facility; If the schedule is continued and sleeping quarters are maintained, work on enhancing the look to a more professional appeal. Plants and pictures on the wall create a soothing and comfortable work environment.
- Start working towards MLEAP Accreditation. This would address the evidence rooms and provide a clear process for all operations of the department. Professional and well-organized police departments instill a positive and high energy work environment,

which transcends to officers producing a better product and ultimately serving the citizens at a higher degree.

- Most of the staff complained about the conditions of the fleet and having a Mustang (EV) and Ford Bronco. They are correct, all three vehicles should be the same, carrying the same equipment, configurations, and safety cages. This is the workstation and environment for most of the staff. The Panel recognizes these are substantial investments and take years to rotate out of rotation, but a plan to make all three vehicles the same is highly recommended.
- Yearly reviews of salary comparisons with area police departments. Salary ranges are continually evolving within law enforcement and across the state. Although union contracts lockdown increases generally for three years, these fluctuate substantially in the current market and monitoring these increases is highly recommended for management. Opening a contract to increase wages to maintain competitiveness and support a police department preserves staff and increases morale.

Consideration of the recommendations in this report under Communications should greatly assist in improving the department's morale. Upon focusing on this crucial topic, it may be beneficial to anonymously survey department members to gather more detailed information on the causes of any morale issues and their recommendations for improvement.

Labor Relations / Collective Bargaining

Labor relations refer to the relationship between department and town management and the union, if one exists. Collective bargaining is the process by which two parties (the town and the union) reach an agreement over numerous facets of the employee / employer relationship including pay, benefits, and processes such as the investigation of complaints and discipline. It is vital to have good chemistry between union representatives (frequently referred to as shop stewards) and town administration. Frequently, a simple dialogue and willingness to understand each other's concerns and desires can help avoid grievances, confrontation and mistrust.

Labor Relations / Collective Bargaining – Findings:

The officers and Sergeant of Thomaston PD are represented by the Fraternal Order of Police, which is a large national police union. In Maine, a large number of agencies are represented by the FOP and the organization has a good reputation among police administrators.

The current contract was ratified in March of 2024 for the period of July 1st, 2024, until June 30th, 2027. The contract appears fairly standard and addresses all major concerns associated with the police department. Staff seemed content with the current contract and did not note any issues.

Officer Perez serves as the Union President. The only apparent grievance was associated with the discipline and later separation of an employee in late 2024/early 2025.

Labor Relations / Collective Bargaining – Recommendations:

Although the decision to conduct this Assessment by the Town of Thomaston may have sparked some minor and what are believed to be temporary issues, overall labor relations are very good.

The Panel does not have any recommendations.

Internal Affairs

The internal affairs (IA) function refers to the process by which the department investigates complaints or information otherwise received which, if true, would constitute a violation of a department policy, state, or federal law. The objective, fair, and prompt investigation of complaints is absolutely necessary to keep the community's trust that bad actions by the town's police officers will be addressed.

Because investigations into employee misconduct involve employee rights as defined by contract and labor law, it is imperative that the person conducting these investigations is properly trained to do so and possesses the temperament to both aggressively root out wrongdoing while simultaneously convincing officers that he/she cares about them individually and the preservation of the department's untarnished reputation.

Internal Affairs – Findings:

The Review Panel was provided one digital copy of a formal internal affairs report that appeared to be thoroughly investigated regarding the truthfulness of an employee. The information provided consisted of reports and proper documentation from the investigator (now Interim Chief), but did not include a "final finding", etc. This was the only report provided for a several-year review of the IA files and as stated, was only available because the investigator is now the Interim Chief. In addition, the Town Manager believes the IA folders are kept at the police department, while the police department believes the folders are kept with the personnel files at the Town Office. The Panel was not able to see any actual IA folders, nor the complete folder from the IA mentioned above.

Internal Affairs – Recommendations:

Because of the high stakes involved in these matters, it is crucial that those conducting IA investigations (the Sergeant) and those responsible for reviewing investigative findings and administering discipline (the Chief) have training in the proper procedure for handling them. This is also a skill that can become stale, so occasionally refreshing this training is important.

Although the lack of any IAs in recent memory can be interpreted as a good sign – and it probably is – administrators should keep in mind that when an IA can be conducted based on

department documents and law, it should be. When an administration has a credible allegation of misconduct and does not follow the proper steps to investigate, employees lose faith in the system and worry that good order may not be maintained.

Additionally, IAs should be kept in a locked cabinet in the Chief's office.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Policies and Procedures manual is the single most important guide for every member of the police department, from the rookie trainee up to and including the Chief of Police. There is no set of written documents as important to the orderly operation and administration of a law enforcement organization.

It is very important for the policy manual to be organized in a clear and logical fashion, so that users can find what they are looking for. Users should also find it a reasonable task to read through the manual and remember what is in it. No employee should ever be in doubt about what is expected of him or her in terms of job expectations or performance as prescribed.

The Policies and Procedures manual must be thought of by all employees as a current and real working document and resource that is in constant use, not just when an employee is being considered for discipline. This means it should be regularly reviewed so that outdated information, policies, and procedures are either updated or removed. The best manual is one that is so clear and complete that no one is ever surprised about their responsibilities and duties.

In Maine, there are 14 policies which police departments are required to have by law. For those policies, minimum policy standards are developed by the Maine Criminal Justice Academy. The Maine Chiefs of Police Association then uses those minimum standards to craft model policies for departments to use if they so choose. Departments are not required to use the model policies, but they must ensure that they have policies containing the minimum standards.

In addition to the model policies, the Maine Chiefs of Police Association also produces numerous other model policies, most of which are adopted in some form by police departments in the State.

Policies and Procedures – Findings:

The Review Panel inspected each of the mandatory policies, with the exception of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV, or drone) policy which Thomaston does not have. This policy is only required by law for agencies with a drone program – Thomaston has none. For each reviewed policy, the panel checked the document against a random selection of several minimum standards. All were found to be properly updated.

Proper policy implementation and upkeep is time consuming and carries a high level of liability. The Thomaston Police Department contracts with Dirigo Safety for policy development and maintenance. Dirigo Safety is a Maine based company who provides law enforcement specific training, to include policy implementation and review. Additionally, Dirigo Safety oversees the Maine Law Enforcement Accreditation Program in partnership with the Maine Chiefs of Police Association. Given the size of Thomaston PD, it is prudent to contract with a company like Dirigo Safety for all things related to current policies.

There are 48 administrative policies and 63 operational policies. A random audit of numerous policies demonstrated that they were well written and covered all pertinent areas required.

All policies are available electronically on a shared folder accessible through the Town's computer network. Additionally, there is a single three ring binder in the Police Department where hard copies of all of the policies are kept. In the beginning of that binder, there is a sheet with a list of every policy that each officer signed. In essence, each officer signed that they acknowledged all 111 policies by way of a single signature. The date of all of the signatures is 2023. The binder included sign offs of officers employed in 2023, including several officers who no are longer employed.

More importantly, the binder was missing signature pages from four current employees. The Interim Chief was able to find two missing signature pages in file cabinets in separate rooms but was unable to provide documentation for the two remaining officers.

There was some confusion from staff that all policies were only signed once per year, instead of as they were updated/implemented.

Policy and Procedure – Recommendations:

Two of the most common lawsuits in law enforcement are “failure to train” and “failure to supervise”. Therefore, proper documentation that officers have been provided with proper directions, by way of policy implementation, is critical.

As the Panel discovered, there are adequate and appropriate policies in place. However, it is apparent that by just signing one signature, acknowledging that all 111 policies were reviewed, the policies were not reviewed in as much depth as they should be.

The Panel recommends utilizing software specifically designed for public safety policy management called Power DMS. This software is recognized throughout the national law enforcement community and is required for any agency considering both State Accreditation (MLEAP) or The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Accreditation (CALEA).

Power DMS stores all agency policies digitally and can be accessed remotely on MDTs, workstations, or even through a mobile phone app, thereby allowing quick access to consult if needed. More importantly, the program documents when officers review and electronically

“sign off” on each policy. Additionally, officers are notified if there are any new/updated policies that need their review.

Because policies change over the years, when faced with potential lawsuits sometimes referring to alleged incidents in the past, the ability to provide any version of a policy that was active at the time, as well as providing clear documentation of the exact date and time an officer acknowledged the policy, proves invaluable.

TRAINING

The importance of a robust training program cannot be overstated. A well-trained police officer not only benefits himself or herself, but other fellow officers, their organization, and the community they serve.

Although small departments may not have SWAT teams or K-9 units, they must be able to provide basic services to the community.

Society expects the police to know all civil, criminal, and motor vehicle laws to obtain confessions, fingerprints, and DNA. They also expect the police to be in excellent physical shape, proficient with firearms, drive with due regard, and apprehend all criminals without injury. Most of society knows this is a myth. However, wise police administrators know that well trained police officers do in fact catch criminals, obtain confessions, collect fingerprints, DNA, and other relevant crime scene evidence. They are also able to drive defensively, know the appropriate criminal codes, and answer all Calls for Service.

These Calls for Service may be as minor as a barking dog complaint or as serious as a person with a gun. The police must respond to each call professionally and demonstrate their ability to investigate the complaint and reach a final conclusion.

State statutes mandate that all law enforcement officers, either full or part-time, have annual mandatory training. This training includes 20 hours of mandatory topics selected by the Academy, and 10 hours of elective training (approved by the Chief) per year. In 2024, the mandatory topics include two hours each in: Firearms qualification, new law and case law updates, four hours of Mechanic of Restraint and Control, Responding to Domestic Terrorist Threats, Responding to Mental Health & the Yellow Flag Law (Extreme Risk Protective Orders)

In addition to the provision of training to meet mandatory minimums, departments use training to correct performance deficiencies, to enhance department capabilities, or to provide professional development. For purposes of this report, professional development refers to training that prepares officers to serve an enhanced role in the department. These roles could include an instructor certification so that the officer can teach critical skills to his/her teammates and other area officers. It might include a special skill needed at the PD, such as Civil Rights Officer training, so the department has personnel prepared to respond to and

investigate hate crimes. It might also include training that's provided to prepare an interested employee for a future opportunity (promotion to Sergeant, assignment to Detective, etc.).

Training - Findings:

The required annual mandatory training courses are accessed by officers through an online training platform. This platform, and one other like it, is used by at least half of the agencies in the State for mandatory training. The allocated budget for FY26 has an 11% reduction in the training account, with \$8,500 assigned for training and expenditures associated with this requirement.

Training - Recommendations:

The modern-day law enforcement agencies are inundated like no other time in history with new law changes, updates, best practice modifications with limited clarity. Today's law enforcement officers, and in the case of the review of the Thomaston Police Department, are placed in a vehicle with computers, weapon systems, specialized equipment and monitored by a camera, while required to make the high-stress decision within seconds of arriving at a critical incident. The mandate for good, appropriate, and prudent training with detailed documentation to minimize civil liability, is essential and a priority. Complicated laws, such as the Weapons Restriction Law (Yellow Flag), is one example of emerging laws placing more responsibility and liability at the feet of law enforcement. Police departments across Maine are assigning a person dedicated to managing training alone, a luxury for larger departments, but not for the small police agencies. The Review Panel recognizes training and proper documentation is the foundation of a well-disciplined and service-oriented agency and recommends the following.

- Financial investment to identify specialized training to address the maintenance concerns outlined in the report and assign officers to manage with appreciate compensation. The FY26 training budget was reduced by 11%.
- Training records, assignments and yearly reviews are assigned to the Chief of Police.
- Individual reviews on the growth and development for each officer to the needs of the community and police department.
- Increases in the overtime budget to support enhanced department and regional training to active threat response, deadly force applications and school-based concerns.
- Advanced training targeting single response officer to critical incidents.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Panel found a department being led by an Interim Chief of Police that is extremely open-minded and clearly trying to move the agency forward in a positive direction. The Interim Chief has not had proper guidance or experience to recognize some of the issues at hand, however, immediately remedied them as they were brought to his attention.

It became evident almost immediately that the PD is plagued by a culture of “this is what we have always done”, which has proved in many instances to be incorrect, subpar, and prime for civil liability. Proper policies (drafted by Dirigo Safety) are already in place to address many of the issues outlined in this review. However, staff are either unaware of and/or not adhering to them, falling back to past practices.

The Panel members feel confident that each significant issue that was identified has been or will be addressed in this report and that this document, when considered in its entirety, provides a comprehensive, fair, and independent assessment of the Thomaston Police Department. Because of the number of interviews conducted, not every concern raised is specifically addressed in this report. The Panel considered the significance of the concern, the frequency with which it was raised by interviewees, and how the information gathered dovetailed with in-person observations on site.

The facility and the department’s equipment are in generally good working order, though the Panel makes recommendations for improving both.

Of the concerns the Panel has delineated in this report, it is recommended that you initially focus on the following areas:

1. The need to move forward in selecting a Chief of Police and quickly establish a command staff and address the priorities identified in this report.
2. The need to adhere to the backlog and security concerns of the evidence rooms. Reviewing old evidence, cases, and purging according to state law and policy.
3. The need to address clarity with training, documentation, and proof of compliance.
4. The need to review the Axon camera system, pertaining to investment, training, redaction, FOIA requests, and deployment.
5. The need to have all three cruisers be the same: police/pursuit rated, safety cages, uniformity as related to equipment and functionality consistent throughout.
6. The need to review the patrol schedule for recruitment, retention, customer service, and liability.
7. The need to review the business district related call volume, classification, crime, and officer availability.
8. The need to improve cleanliness, organization, and efficient use of space inside the police facility.

The officers and Interim Police Chief of the Thomaston Police Department were intelligent, invested in making their department better, and appear to be well regarded in the community. In short, none of the issues that the Panel uncovered and documented in this report are beyond the ability of the agency and the town to repair. The Panel believes the Department will find the line officers ready and eager to assist them in these areas.

This Review Panel has made its recommendations based on its collective law enforcement, supervisory, and leadership experience. The Panel believes these recommendations to be reasonable and consistent with best practices. In order to ensure accuracy and fairness, the Panel repeatedly and thoroughly reviewed all findings. The Panel hopes that you find this work product useful to you as you chart a course for the future of the Thomaston Police Department, which is believed to be bright.

Exhibit A:

04/18/25
15:43

Thomaston Police Department
Law Total Incident Report, by Agency, Nature

1275
Page: 1

Nature of Incident	Total Incidents
-----	-----
Agency: Thomaston PD	
911 Hangup	59
911 Open Line	27
Abandoned Vehicle	9
Motor Vehicle Accident	41
Robbery in Progress	1
Administrative	63
Agency Assistance	377
Alarm	209
Ambulance Assist	33
Animal Bite/Attack	1
Animal Noise	3
Animal Problem	12
Animal Welfare	17
Arson	1
Assault	13
Sexual Assault	3
Attempt to Locate	4
ATV Operation Problem	2
Back Pain	4
Non-sufficient Funds Check	1
Bail Check	4
Violation of Bail Conditions	15
Background Check - Government	4
Burglary	13
Business or License Problem	1
Car vs Pedestrian	2
Car/Deer 10-55	15
Cardiac or Resp Arrest/Death	1
Check In Per Court Order	559
Child Abuse or Neglect	5
Citizen Assist	44
Citizen Dispute	1
Civil Problem	17
Communications Problem	3
Criminal Mischief	30
Custodial Interference	5
Dead Body	3
Deliver Message	6
Detail Assignment	18
Disabled Vehicle	28
Disorderly Conduct	46
Domestic	31
Drug Take Back	3
Controlled Substance Problem	24
Traffic - Erratic Oper Vehicle	68
Escort	13
Fingerprinting	1
Fire Alarm	1
Fireworks	3
Foot Patrol	2
Forgery	1
Found Property	24
Fraud	3

04/18/25
15:43

Thomaston Police Department
Law Total Incident Report, by Agency, Nature

1275
Page: 2

Nature of Incident	Total Incidents
Gunshot	1
Harassment	28
Hemorrhage	3
Hit and Run 10-55	23
Information Report	154
Intoxicated Person	24
Juvenile Problem	45
Litter/Pollution/Public Health	2
Lockout	32
Loitering	20
Lost Property	12
Medical Emergency	8
Mental Health Issue	27
Miscellaneous CAD Call Record	8
Missing Person	5
Burglary of a Motor Vehicle	4
Motor Vehicle Complaints	55
Nuisance	13
Obstructing Gov't Admin	2
DUI Alcohol or Drugs	14
Overdose	7
Paperwork Servd For Othr Agenc	30
Paperwork Servd For This Agenc	20
Paperwork to Serve	10
Parking Problem	18
Traffic Accident w/ Damage	124
Pedestrian Check	6
Violation of Protect Frm Abuse	8
Traffic Accident, w/ Injuries	1
Police Information	9
Probation Violation	1
Release of Property	1
Property Check	1547
Property Damage, Non Vandalism	7
Public Relations	61
Public Works Referral	10
Radar Detail	170
Recovered Stolen Property	5
Recovered Stolen Vehicle	5
Runaway Juvenile	2
Scam Call	2
School Visit	43
Search Warrant	1
Sex Offense	3
Sex Offender Registration	14
Report of shots fired	5
Stalking	2
Stray Animal	19
Attempted Suicide	2
Suspicious Vehicle	39
Suspicious Person/Circumstance	97
Theft	163
Theft of Services	2
Theft - Automobile	8
Threatening	16

04/18/25
15:43

Thomaston Police Department
Law Total Incident Report, by Agency, Nature

1275
Page: 3

Nature of Incident	Total Incidents
Traffic Detail	10
Traffic Hazard	21
Traffic Violation	34
Traffic Stop	884
Tree no wires	1
Trespassing	96
Unsecure Premise	15
Utility Problem	24
Vagrancy	4
Vehicle off roadway no damage	5
Vehicle Maintenance	4
Vehicle Search	6
Vehicle Theft	2
VIN Number Inspection	8
Wanted Person	36
Water Rescue Incident	1
Well-Being Chck	113

Total Incidents for This Agency:	6076

Total Incidents for This Report: 6076

Report includes:

All dates between `00:00:00 01/01/24` and `23:59:59 12/31/24`
All agencies matching `0703`
All natures
All locations
All responsible officers
All dispositions
All clearance codes
All observed offenses
All reported offenses
All offense codes
All circumstance codes

*** End of Report /tmp/rptD4DadJ-rplwtir.r3_1 ***