

Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police
MICHIGAN LAW ENFORCEMENT ACCREDITATION PROGRAM



Onsite Final Report

The Meridian Township Police Department

January 9, 2020

Team Leader: David Livingston

Team Member: Brian Vandenbrink

A. Agency Name, CEO and AM:

Meridian Township Police Department
5151 Marsh Road
Okemos, Michigan 48864
517-853-4800

Ken Plaga
Chief of Police
plaga@meridian.mi.us
517-853-4896

Richard Grillo
Accreditation Manager
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B. Dates of the On-Site Assessment:

Monday, December 9, 2019 – Tuesday, December 10, 2019

C. Assessment Team:

1. Team Leader: David Livingston, Lieutenant
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D. Community and Agency Profile:

1. **Community Profile**

Meridian Township was first settled by pioneers in 1836. In November 1836, Obed Marshall purchased 180 acres of land near present-day Haslett. The earliest settlers located at Pine Lake (now Lake Lansing) and made use of the numerous stands of pines to build their cabins. The lake was later the site of a Spiritualist Meeting Camp led by John Haslett. During the late 19th century, the lake became known as a local vacation

area served by an "interurban trolley" which ran from the City of Lansing to the resort on the south side of the lake. An amusement park was introduced and enjoyed immense popularity into the mid-20th century. Currently, the Village of Haslett is located at the south side of Lake Lansing.

The first settlers near the current Village of Okemos (to the south of the former Pine Lake) were Sanford Marsh and his wife who built their cabin in 1839. They were soon followed by Joseph Kilbourne, who took out land for his brother-in-law, Freeman Bray. It was Bray who platted out the southeast corner of his land and sold the lots to newcomers traveling into the mid-state wilderness. The village was first known as Hamilton.

A local Native American, Chief John Okemos, was well known throughout the area. The village area was one of his primary camping areas and he traveled frequently between the village and another campsite near present-day Portland, Michigan. In 1857, the Michigan Legislature changed the name of the village officially to Okemos to honor the old chief.

The Township is rich with history and one resident, Joseph Kilbourne, had a major role in the decision in 1847 to relocate the state capitol from Detroit to Lansing (then Lansing Township). A local organization, the Friends of Historic Meridian, has an archive of local historic information and also maintains the historic buildings in the Meridian Historical Village.

In October of 1959, the Township gained the name "Charter" in its title due to the potential of facing serious sewage control problems and the inability of the present form of government. By becoming a Charter Township, the growing community would have a government with additional powers, including increased flexibility within the organizational structure, greater tax authority, and protection of the Township's boundaries against annexation.

The Meridian Mall opened in 1969. The mall originally featured the J.W. Knapp Company and Woolco as its anchor stores, and underwent many expansions in its history. Expansions in 1982 and 1987 added two more wings of stores anchored by Hudson's (now Macy's) and Mervyn's. Further renovations at the beginning of the 21st century added Galyan's (now Dick's Sporting Goods) and several other big-box stores. Meridian Mall features about 125 stores and a food court, plus a movie theater on its periphery. The mall's anchor stores are J. C. Penney, Macy's, and Dick's Sporting Goods. Other major tenants include Bed Bath & Beyond, H&M, Launch Trampoline, Old Navy, Planet Fitness, and Schuler Books & Music. Meridian Mall is owned and managed by CBL Properties, which has owned it since 1998.

Township demographics indicate that 76% of residents are Caucasian and 15% Asian with the remainder of residents being African American (3.1%), Hispanic (4.1%), or more than one race (4.6%).

The Meridian Township Police Department also provides police services with Williamstown Township through an agreement that originates from 2011.

2. Agency Profile

Ingham County Sheriff's Department deputies were assigned to patrol Meridian Township prior to 1950. In 1948, Deputies Milton Lamb, Ted Davis, and Theodore Dorriell were assigned to patrol Meridian Township. On April 13, 1950, the Township Board moved to obtain police protection from the Sheriff's department. The Township asked the Sheriff to make the selection of deputies and the township reimbursed the Sheriff's department at the rate of \$250.00 per month.

The retail presence in Meridian Township began in 1969, with the opening of both the Meridian Mall and the new Meijer store in time for Christmas. The current Municipal Building was constructed in 1972, and the Township offices, including the police department, re-located from the corner of Haslett and Okemos Roads. The police department was located where HOMTV offices are now.

By the mid-1970's, the Meridian Division had become essentially independent, relying on the Sheriff for arrest powers, radios, vehicle equipment, and uniforms. The deputies assigned to Meridian Township were township employees, the patrol cars were owned by the township, and the deputies worked out of the Township Hall. Meridian Township even established its own records office independent from the Sheriff's department.

Subdivisions were expanding rapidly, and citizens of Meridian Township wanted accountability from their officers. If a citizen was unhappy with police service, they had to call the Sheriff's Department in Mason. The Township board unanimously passed a resolution in the fall of 1979 to create the Meridian Township Police Department. This resolution became effective on December 15, 1979. Twenty-four deputies were sworn in as the first Meridian officers. By 1988, the department grew to 28 sworn members.

The current public safety building was constructed and dedicated in 1992. The building was patterned after a Wisconsin city's department.

Perhaps the most significant change during the history of the MTPD was the advent of Public Safety. In February of 1996, the Township Board voted to consolidate the Police and Fire departments. The goal was to improve service and cut costs for the citizens of the Township. New hires dually trained in police and fire academies were sought. Current officers were sent to the fire academy. Public Safety did not work well for the Township, and the departments separated back into police and fire in 1997.

The department grew to its largest size and budget just prior to the recession of 2008, at 45 sworn and a budget of over 5 million dollars. Layoffs were avoided during the recession through attrition. Beginning January 1, 2011 Meridian Township entered into an agreement with Williamstown Township to provide police services. As a result of the contract, the Township Board authorized hiring one additional patrol officer.

MTPD is currently authorized for 41 sworn, and consists of two divisions, the Uniform Division and the Services Division.

Uniform Division includes:

Dayshift, Night Shift and Jump Shift Patrols
School Resource Officers
Special Response Team
K-9 Unit

Services Division includes:

Investigations Unit
Records Unit
Quartermaster
Cadet Unit
Court Officer
Training

Department training is emphasized with the department conducting most of its training using in-house trained instructors as well as using outside vendors in areas such as Emergency Vehicle Operation, Use of Force, Active Assailant, Implicit Bias, Fair and Impartial Policing and weapons qualification to name a few. Although some of the training is documented through PowerDMS, the Department also uses a software program titled LEA to track training, print certificates, etc.

According to the latest statistics (2018) the Meridian Township Police Department responded to 18,588 calls for service which generated 6,801 incident reports, including 577 arrests. The Department also issued 1,922 citations.

3. CEO Biography

Ken Plaga has worked for the Meridian Township Police Department since 1995. Prior to joining the Meridian Township Police Department, he worked as a Public Safety Officer for Blackman Township. Ken holds a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from Michigan State University and a Master's in Public Administration from Western Michigan University. Ken is also a graduate of the 229th Session of the FBI National Academy and the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command. Ken has served in many positions including Field Training Officer, Investigator, Patrol Sergeant, Administrative Sergeant, Services Division Commander, and Uniform Division Commander and Assistant Chief. Ken was appointed to the Chief of Police position in July of 2018. Ken instructs undergraduate classes for Michigan State University in the field of criminal investigations and police supervision.

4. Accreditation Manager Biography

Lt. Rick Grillo obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice in 2002. Rick began his career in 2003 with the Meridian Township Police Department as a road patrol Officer. During his time as an Officer, he worked several assignments including Field Training Officer, Chairman of the Police Advisory Committee, DARE and School Resources

Officer, and three years as an Investigator. Rick was promoted to Sergeant in 2015 where he took over as the Field Training Program Coordinator and supervised a road patrol platoon on night shift. Rick was promoted to Lieutenant in 2018 and named the Services Division Commander. He currently oversees the investigations unit, court services, records unit, evidence and property room, and the cadet program. Rick is the Accreditation Manager for MTPD. Rick graduated from the Michigan State University School of Staff and Command in 2017. Rick grew up in Grand Haven and has been married to his wife Sarah for 16 years. They have two children, Emma (8) and Russell (6).

5. Future Issues

The Meridian Township Police Department's staff is highly educated and extremely dedicated to the community. The CEO, Chief Ken Plaga, is most proud of the fact that his staff will not settle for the status quo. The agency intends to continue its community-orientated mindset.

In previous years the Meridian Township Police Department sought accreditation through CALEA but that process was never realized. Chief Plaga and his Accreditation Team have worked hard to put their Department in compliance with the standards set forth by the Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission (MLEAC) as they seek accreditation through this organization. Everyone in the agency is always improving themselves and the organization.

Chief Plaga stated the most challenging future issue is personnel. The Meridian Township Police Department has a number of young officers with less than four years on the job. The inexperience is something that will work its way through the ranks. However, when it comes time for these same officers to reach retirement age it could create a void and place the Department in a similar situation in the future with hiring a large number of inexperienced officers.

The agency is also looking for candidates who possess good interpersonal communication skills

Chief Plaga has a comprehensive succession plan. Newly promoted supervisory staff have attended leadership development seminars and training sessions. All command staff are highly educated and well prepared for advancement. Chief Plaga is dedicated to maintaining best practices and to keeping up with the rapidly changing issues facing policing in America.

E. Public Information Activities:

Public notice and input are cornerstones of democracy and MLEAC accreditation. This section reports on the community's opportunity to comment on their law enforcement agency and to bring matters to the attention of the commission that otherwise may be overlooked.

1. Telephone Contacts

The public telephone line was active on Tuesday, December 10, 2019, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The telephone line was tested, found to be functional, and three calls were received:

Steve Cook – Superintendent of Haslett School District (517) 339-8242

Mr. Cook indicated the school district has a very good relationship with the police department. The school liaison officers have had a positive impact on the kids in the middle and high schools. The officers work security at the various school sporting events.

Police officers assist school staff in areas such as how to respond during lockdown training three times per year. Police officers also conduct drug sweeps in high school and middle school buildings throughout the school year.

The school district also grants access to their school buildings for the police department to conduct training exercises. Mr. Cook has a very good relationship with the Chief of Police. He believes they do a fantastic job and indicated the community is supportive of the police as was indicated during a recent millage rate increase that was passed in favor of a better retirement for public safety.

Mr. Cook fully supports the agency's effort to become state accredited.

Cullen Harkness – Harkness Law Firm (517) 381-2461

Mr. Harkness is a local resident, business owner, and former prosecutor.

In eleven years as a prosecutor in the area, he was impressed by the professionalism of the Meridian Township Police Department. They presented cases that required very little follow-up.

Not only did they perform their professional duties better than other departments in the area, their community-oriented approach to policing was quite apparent.

As a business owner in the area, Mr. Harkness stated the Meridian Township Police Department is very responsive to the needs of the business community. During an active shooter incident, the department did a great job alerting area businesses of the incident.

As a resident, Mr. Harkness said he sees officers routinely patrolling neighborhoods and providing services like vacation checks. Overall, the department is very professional.

Mr. Harkness believes Chief Plaga is doing a great job especially as he navigates through political waters.

Mr. Harkness fully supports the agency's efforts to become state accredited.

Kristine Sermak – Principal at Okemos High School (517) 706-4901

Ms. Sermak works closely with the Meridian Township Police Department to keep those in her school safe. They worked together to create a District Safety Plan which includes protocols for all weather-related disasters as well as active assailant incidents.

The school also partners with the police department to conduct drug sweeps which are part of an education plan for students and parents which is why the drug sweeps are supported by parents.

Fire drills and lockdown drills are also part of the cooperative efforts between the police department and Okemos High School.

Ms. Sermak spoke of an incident where a special needs student ran from school. A school liaison officer stopped the student, spoke with them, de-escalating the situation and walked the student back to the school.

The school liaison officers are very good with the kids at school and have built a very good rapport with the students.

Chief Plaga is “outstanding”. He is very professional, reachable and an integral part of the team. Chief Plaga is a hands-on chief and is active in his ‘OK to Say’ program.

Ms. Sermak is very supportive of the Meridian Township Police Department’s effort to become state accredited.

2. Correspondence

Assessors received one email correspondence regarding the accreditation process:

*Liebler, Julie <lieblerj@msu.edu>
Wed, Dec 18, 2019, 8:51 AM*

Greetings Lieutenants Vandenbrink and Livingston,

I am a professor at the MSU School of Criminal Justice and retired police chief. I am writing to support the accreditation of the Meridian Township Police Department. I have worked with several members of their organization throughout the last many years and have always found them to be professional, dedicated, and excellent representatives of law enforcement. We frequently use their command staff as instructors for our School of Staff and Command and First Line Supervision courses. They provide a knowledgeable and personable perspective for our students. Additionally, Chief Plaga has been an excellent addition to our adjunct teaching faculty. He has taught several undergraduate courses for us and always receives outstanding reviews from our students. We appreciate and depend on the partnership that we’ve established with the Meridian Township Police Department. They are excellent representatives of the police profession

and I therefore highly recommend them for accreditation approval. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*Julie Liebler, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor and Director of Outreach
MSU School of Criminal Justice
655 Auditorium Dr.
East Lansing, MI 48824
517.432.6448*

3. Media Interest

There were no inquiries from the media to assessors regarding the on-site.

4. Community Outreach Contacts

There were no community outreach contacts scheduled for the assessors during the on-site.

5. Agency Ride-along

Due to time constraints brought about by a comprehensive tour, assessors were unable to conduct any ride-alongs. Instead, assessors conducted several interviews of police personnel and participated in observations of compliance with accreditation standards during the Department tour to satisfy assessors.

6. Interviews

Frank Walsh – Meridian Township Supervisor

Mr. Walsh had some good things to say regarding the Meridian Township Police Department. He indicated he has a good working relationship with Chief Plaga and he is in favor of the process of accreditation. One item we discussed involved the cap on the purchase of items with the Meridian Township PCARD. Currently the limitation on a PCARD purchase is \$ 250.00. This causes Chief Plaga's Administrative Assistant to spend too much time putting purchases requiring more than \$ 250.00 out for bid, keeping her from other duties she has to perform. Mr. Walsh stated he has been approached about this same topic from others and it is a matter that will be taken care of during the first part of 2020 when the Township hires a Purchasing Director.

Jurell Romanow – Custodian

Mr. Romanow has worked as a custodian for the Meridian Township Police Department for the past three months. He likes working there and has no issues with anyone. When he first started working he had some pre-conceived opinions of police officers in general

based on some experiences he had growing up. Since Mr. Romanow has gotten to know police officers he feels very comfortable with them and they seem to be comfortable with him.

Becky Payne – Detective

Detective Payne has worked for the Meridian Township Police Department since 2007. She is currently assigned to the Investigations Unit as a Criminal Sexual Conduct (CSC) investigator.

Detective Payne loves her job and she is thankful for what she is able to do in her community with regard to CSC investigations. She stated there are a lot of college students who live in Meridian Township so chances for CSC related cases being investigated is higher than in most jurisdictions.

Detective Payne likes the family-like atmosphere at work. Everyone seems to mesh and as one of a few females on the department she feels she is treated well.

Jacqueline Allen – Police Officer

Officer Allen is relatively new to the Meridian Township Police Department. She was hired in May 2019 and is currently on probation. She feels very welcomed at the department and loves the community policing environment she works in.

Officer Allen stated she is treated fairly while in the Field Training Officer program. Her Field Training Officers do not cut her any slack because she is female, nor do they let her 'get away' with anything because she is female. She also indicated that the FTO program at Meridian Township is the best in the area. She knows of other Departments that have shorter FTO programs. She likes the fact that her FTO's will mentor her after she leaves her initial training.

Officer Allen said she has never felt more at home than she does at the Meridian Township Police Department.

7. Community Involvement

The Meridian Township Police Department is commitment to Community Oriented Policing by establishing partnerships with businesses, organizations, schools, and citizen groups. The Department strives to provide various programs for residents to enhance their quality of life in the community.

In 2018, a total of 1,200 citizen satisfaction surveys were mailed to victims and complainants involved in traffic accidents and other calls for service in Meridian Township and Williamstown Township. The surveys were sent to measure citizen satisfaction in the following areas: Helpfulness, Friendliness, Knowledge, Quality of Service, Professional Conduct and Response Time. The overall average of the 277 surveys that

were returned was 93.66%. The low score was 92% in the areas of Knowledge and Quality of Service and the high score was 96% in the area of Friendliness.

By comparison, the same survey of the Ingham County 9-1-1 Dispatch Center resulted in an average score of 72.2% in five of the same categories (Response Time was not measured).

Even with this small sampling, it appears that citizens of the communities patrolled by the Meridian Township Police Department are satisfied with the overall performance of the department.

The Meridian Township Police Department participates in Shop with a Cop and other community related ventures on a regular basis.

The Meridian Township Police Department participates in an annual event called Celebrate Meridian where they interact with the community while providing safety and other community services.

F. Essential Services:

Chapter 1 – The Administrative Function:

Direction of Personnel

The Chief of Police has the sole authority to issue, modify, and approve agency written directives. The agency uses Power DMS for their accreditation documentation which includes their written directive system. The overall written directive system was clear and understandable. The directives were constructed in a logical manner with employee duties and responsibilities clearly defined, including constraints on employee actions and expectations.

Fiscal Control

The agency has two cash accounts, one in the Records section and one at the front desk. The front desk cash account is mainly controlled by cadets, in a cadet's absence a supervisor can also access it. The agency does not have a petty cash account nor a confidential fund account. The cash fund at the front desk is balanced daily. Both funds are audited at least once a month.

Internal Affairs

Internal Affairs is the responsibility of the office of the Chief. The Chief is responsible for the direction and control of the investigation of citizen complaints and the department's internal affairs function. If assigned an internal affairs investigation, the command officer will have the authority to report directly to the CEO. The agency accepts and investigates all complaints against the agency or its employees, including anonymous complaints.

A supervisor may relieve an employee from duty in severe cases. Examples of situations where such action may be deemed appropriate would be a complaint of a very serious nature or an emergency circumstance. The initial suspension will be with full pay and requires immediate notification of the Chief of Police.

During 2019, the agency conducted 10 internal affair investigations, all of which were sustained. During the same period the agency handled three citizen complaints; one was sustained, one was not sustained and the third the employee was exonerated.

Disciplinary Procedures

The agency's written directive system details the rules, regulations and expectations for employee conduct. The agency is well-disciplined and has procedures to apply training and counseling in lieu of punitive employee discipline. The agency's disciplinary procedure includes corrective actions for minor complaints, which include verbal warning and notice of infraction. The agency has an appropriate appeal and grievance process in place with established timelines. There were no appeals or grievances filed during 2019, there was one grievance in 2018.

Organization

All sworn personnel take, sign and subsequently abide by an oath of office to enforce the law and uphold the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the State of Michigan, and faithfully perform duties of police officer for the Charter Township of Meridian. All agency personnel acknowledge a code of ethics and receive ethics training. Bias-influenced policing is strictly prohibited by the agency. There is a clear definition for bias-influenced policing, including but not limited to race, ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, religion, economic status, cultural group or any identifiable groups. There were no reported incidents violating the policy during the accreditation cycle.

The agency also prohibits unlawful workplace violence, discrimination, and harassment, including sexual harassment, threats, physical attack or property damage. The directive requires employees to report any type of harassment and requires investigations to be conducted in accordance with state law. There was one report of workplace harassment during the accreditation cycle. This incident was fully investigated with the assistance of their Human Resources Department. The incident was substantiated and the offending officer resigned from the police department.

The police personnel have structured unity of command. The Chief of Police is supported by an Assistant Chief. Both the Chief and Assistant Chief are at-will employees. The Meridian Township Police Department is organized into two divisions: Uniform Division and Services Division. The Assistant Chief has direct operational control over the Uniform Division and oversees the operation of the Services Division. Each patrol section is commanded by a sergeant who reports to the Assistant Chief. Patrol sections are commonly referred to as platoons. Platoons are responsible for handling the majority of calls for service from the community. The Meridian Township Police Department currently has 38 sworn personnel with authorization for 41 sworn. The officers are represented by

the Police Officers Association of Michigan and the supervisors are represented by the Capital City Labor Union, an off-shoot of the Fraternal Order of Police.

In the absence of the CEO, an acting chief of police is appointed from the command staff, usually the Assistant Chief or the Lieutenant.

Agency Equipment and Property

It is the responsibility of the employee to maintain all law enforcement-related equipment in an operational state and report any malfunctions, damage, or loss of equipment immediately to their supervisor. The wearing of body armor is mandatory for all sworn personnel while working in patrol functions. Administrative and investigative personnel are not required to wear body armor routinely but must have the vest conveniently available to them. There are additional requirements to wear body armor while engaged in pre-planned and high-risk operations. All sworn personnel are responsible for the maintenance of agency-issued equipment.

Public Information

The Chief will appoint the department Public Information Officer (P.I.O.). The Chief, the PIO or a designee will normally authorize media releases. Although it is the primary responsibility of the Public Information Officer to interact with the media, other members of the Meridian Township Police Department are encouraged to assist members of the media whenever possible.

Agency Records and Computers

The agency has a detailed written directive system describing field reporting, follow-up investigations, and the approval of reports by supervision. The department controls access to agency records electronically with records management passwords. No original reports are removed from the Records Division without the approval of the Chief of Police. Juvenile records are kept separate, and there are extra security measures for non-public records. All freedom of information requests are handled by records personnel, and the agency abides by the state retention and disposal requirements in accordance with Michigan Statute and Records Management.

The agency has procedures to protect its central records. The data is stored and backed up electronically and is password-protected. Annual security audits and password audits were performed during the assessment period. There were no breaches in security during the assessment period.

Agency Training

The agency has an excellent training plan. The training records are current and are being maintained in accordance with applicable retention schedules. Training course content is outlined, and lesson plans are utilized. In-house instructors are properly trained and experienced. New sworn personnel are required to complete an extensive training

program. Field training officers are properly selected and trained. Newly promoted personnel receive training consistent with new responsibilities and tasks.

The agency has a remedial training policy and has made use of it several times during the assessment period.

Specific required annual training topics were properly identified in the written directive. Annual training included firearms, hazmat, use of force, defensive tactics, ethics, legal updates, incident command, and bias-influenced policing

Authorization and Use of Agency Weapons and Ammunition

The CEO is the authorizing authority for weapons and ammunition requirements, including specialized weapons and knives. The agency uses certified/qualified staff for armorer inspections, repair and replacement. Records of weapons are properly maintained with written guidelines for storage.

Chapter 2 – The Personnel Function:

Personnel Benefits and Responsibilities

The agency has a written directive outlining an employee assistance program, line-of-duty injury and death circumstance policy, and an employee collision and review process. During the assessment period, there were no serious line of duty injury or death incidents. The agency also has a comprehensive exposure control and reporting policy. Outside employment or business activities of agency employees are prohibited unless specific approval is obtained from the Chief.

Performance Evaluations

All agency personnel receive documented annual performance evaluations. The performance evaluation system has a well-defined purpose statement with established and defined criteria, scored on a rating scale. The system also includes directives to raters regarding evaluation responsibilities and procedures on how to use the required forms. Training for evaluators is documented, and the evaluations are maintained according to the department's retention schedule. The evaluation system has a clear appeal process, and no appeals of evaluations occurred during the assessment period. During the assessment period, the agency had no instances of an employee meeting the criteria for early warning, fit for duty or employee assistance.

Promotion of Sworn Personnel

The promotional process is detailed in policy but is not addressed in the collective bargaining agreements. The process includes four components, each with a possible score of 25. After the process is completed a promotional list is created. The number of candidates on the promotional list is determined prior to the process commencing. The eligibility list may be voided at any time by the Chief of Police. If the list is not voided by

the Chief it will expire automatically after two years from the date it was posted. If the promotional list expires, the Chief has the ability to extend it up to one more year if at least two eligible names remain on the list.

Recruitment of Sworn Personnel

The recruitment plan contains a clear statement that the agency is committed to equal opportunity. The agency has a desire to increase agency diversity. However, the recruitment of qualified personnel based on the agency's minimum standards has become difficult. The agency is also dedicated to creating a work force that is representative of the diversity of the community. The department is primarily Caucasian. Sworn staff includes 24 males. Recruitment activities include assigning recruiters as liaisons with police academies, attending job fairs whose target audience is minorities. The Department has attempted to sponsor minority candidates, currently hired cadets or provided scholarships for their cadets.

Selection of Personnel

The agency has a complete written process for the selection of new full-time personnel, which includes a thorough background investigation, as well as a medical and psychological exam. The initial selection process includes a written skills test. If they attain a minimum established score they can move on to take an Empco Pre-Employment test. If a specific score is reached on the Empco test, the candidate will then be scheduled for an oral interview. Candidates that reach a specified score on the written test and oral interview will move on to the background portion of the process. The Chief of Police, with approval from the Township Manager, will make the conditional offer to successful candidate(s).

Reserve Officers and Civilian Volunteers

The agency does not have a reserve program. The agency does utilize volunteers for parking enforcement however, they have not had any active volunteers during 2019. The agency does maintain a very detailed written directive pertaining to selection, duties, uniforms, and training of parking enforcement volunteers.

Chapter 3 – The Operations Function:

Arrest, Search and Seizure

The Meridian Township Police Department is a full-service agency with full arrest powers. The agency and its policies follow the U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of the State of Michigan in relation to arrest, and search and seizure practices. The agency recognizes the foundation set forth in the Fourth Amendment.

Agency policy outlines the warrantless search exceptions and the need for a court-authorized search warrant, when applicable. The agency takes arrests to the Ingham County jail for processing and housing.

Meridian Township has an area in their police building used for providing Data Master (breathalyzer) tests for Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) arrests. These detention areas are monitored by a centralized camera system. There are emergency alarm buttons nearby, including the officer's prep radio, in the event there were an emergency. Department policy dictates that an additional officer is always present during OWI processing.

For arrests, officers utilize the weapons storage lockers to store their weapons before entering any weapons restricted areas within the department.

The agency has a comprehensive strip search and body cavity search policy in place indicating that a search warrant is necessary to conduct such searches, when and where these types of searches are to be conducted, by whom, and by whose authority.

There were no occurrences of either type of search within this accreditation period.

Interview and Interrogation

The Meridian Township Police Department has established procedures for standards compliance with contemporary criminal procedural requirements related to interviews, investigative detention interviews, and interrogations. The agency has two interview rooms located on the premises including one on the first floor and one in the Investigations Unit. The interrogation rooms are monitored by another detective who has the capabilities of activating an emergency alarm (prep radio). Both interview rooms have audio and video recording capability. The agency's written directive indicates that investigative officers are required to use the agency's audio and video taping capabilities for purposes of recording statements and confessions consistent with state law. The policy also indicates that no more than two officers will be inside an interview room during an interview/interrogation.

Use of Force

Assessors were able to review several use of force reports generated during this assessment period. The reports were well written and concise in nature but thorough in their descriptive language. The initial report is completed by the involved officer and the report is reviewed and approved by their supervisor before it is sent to a higher-ranking officer for review. The supervisor review indicates whether additional training is needed or if the officer acted within policy guidelines. The agency conducts a thorough internal affairs investigation for each use of force incident by way of an established Incident Review Committee.

The three incidents reviewed during this assessment period included a cover officer drawing his weapon and pointing it at a suspect involved in a 'shots fired' call. The second incident involved the use of a taser during a suicidal subject investigation. The third incident reviewed involved the use of pressure points during an investigation of a combative retail fraud subject. All incidents were justified with no recommended changes to training, policy or procedure.

The agency has a policy in place that any officer involved in the use of deadly force is placed on administrative leave with pay pending further investigation.

The agency conducts a detailed review of the use of force incidents quarterly with a final review for all use of force incidents submitted to the Chief of Police for their review.

Communications

The Meridian Township Police Department contracts with the Ingham County 9-1-1 Dispatch Center for its communication needs. The County Dispatch Center is a full-service dispatch authority and the operators are trained in medical emergency dispatching. Assessors were able to view the facilities and see the steps taken in a medical emergency and the recommended charts used by dispatchers and call takers to render aid instructions over the phone while medical services are enroute.

Each dispatch station is set up identically, allowing for dispatchers to move from station to station seamlessly. All emergency medical dispatch is immediately transferred to area Emergency Medical Services working the area.

All recordings are kept in storage for a minimum of 120 days or unless requested by the department for longer retention. Review of any recordings are limited to personnel with a legitimate and official need.

The Dispatch Center has a back-up generator that was observed on-site. The generator will automatically engage if the main power supply is lost thus supplying power to the Dispatch Center to maintain operations. The generator goes through a weekly function test. According to the facilities Staff Services Manager of Operations there has never been an interruption in service when the power supply has been switched from the main power supply to the generator.

The Dispatch Center is equipped with a backup battery power supply system to bridge the gap between the power outage and when the generator begins to provide power. There is a full load test done on the generator every month.

Field Activities

During the assessment period, there were several motor vehicle and foot pursuits within Meridian Township and Williamstown Township. The pursuits originated mainly from minor traffic violations. The Meridian Township Police Department policy allows for pursuits by officers who must follow the guidelines appropriately outlined in the policy.

The agency employs stop sticks as a method to terminate vehicle pursuits. Training in the use of stop sticks is conducted when an officer is first hired with the agency and retraining takes place every three years in-house. All pursuits that were reviewed during this on site were compliant with established department policy and procedures and conformed to the applicable accreditation standards.

The Meridian Township Police Department has in-car computers available in each patrol vehicle, accessible to each patrol officer. The agency also has video recording equipment in their police vehicles. Each video is downloaded and retained for a designated time period unless there is some evidentiary value to the video and then it is kept until the final disposition of the case is known. All other retention of video evidence follows the state retention guidelines.

Patrol officers are assigned to enforcement areas as part of an overall patrol enforcement and crime prevention strategy.

The agency has a foot pursuit policy that was created during the assessment period, which complies with the standard. The written directive has a section that states that the reinstatement of a previously terminated pursuit is permitted at the discretion of a supervisor if conditions change.

Assessors attended a patrol briefing. There was a free exchange of information regarding patrol activities and current neighborhood issues that needed to be addressed. The briefing room itself is conducive to conducting effective roll call training, with access to equipment to show training videos as needed.

Traffic Safety and Enforcement

The Meridian Township Police Department has applicable policies in place regarding traffic violation enforcement, enforcement options, offenders, and traffic direction and control. The directive establishes procedures to conduct motor vehicle stops, including high-risk stops. The enforcement options include warnings, citations, and arrest when appropriate. Assessors observed several proofs of compliance to the standards in regard to the wearing of high visibility vests when working traffic details and crash investigations.

Homeland Security/Critical Incidents

The agency has a critical incident system in place, which includes command, operations, planning, logistics and fiscal responsibility. The agency has used Incident Command System (ICS) strategies effectively while working several events throughout the year including their annual Celebrate Meridian event, which is a major event the police department has successfully worked for a number of years. However, the Operational Plan for this event lacked several key elements that were discussed with the Accreditation Manager. Future Operational Plans will be more detailed reflecting what the accreditation standard requires.

The agency has a comprehensive policy in place detailing everything that needs to be done to put together a comprehensive Operational Plan. However, the proof used during this assessment lacked some key information regarding roles that need to be filled, such as the use of a safety officer, a liaison officer and what their roles are.

Assessors were advised that although debriefings routinely took place following a critical incident there is a need to document them better. Assessors were told that future

debriefings following critical incidents will be better documented in future after action reports.

The agency is already working on improving in this area by developing a template that can be used to include information they already have outlined in their policy and add additional improvements.

Chapter 4 – The Investigative Function:

Criminal Investigation

Officers perform preliminary investigations from initial contacts. The information is reviewed by a shift supervisor before being further reviewed by the Investigations Unit sergeant. If the Investigations Unit sergeant feels the case should be assigned to a detective, they will assign the case for follow-up and/or further investigation. Policies are in place for interviewing, interrogation and eyewitness identification. The instructions to witnesses for identification purposes was available and there were ample samples of properly constructed lineups observed during this accreditation on-site.

Crime Scene Processing

The agency has detectives and crime scene investigators available 24/7 and available to investigate a wide range of crimes including fatal or serious injury traffic crashes, homicides, arson, CSC cases, etc.

Officers at crime scenes are trained to keep the crime scenes undisturbed unless a danger exists that the evidence will be lost or destroyed prior to the arrival of detectives and crime scene investigators. Appropriate and standard compliant packaging requirements are in place and chain of custody is appropriately followed and documented.

Storage of Evidence and Property

Comprehensive policies are in place for property processing and evidence collection. The agency has a well-organized and equipped property room with a computerized evidence management system called “The Beast”. Access to the property room is appropriately limited to the property officer, and the command officer in charge of them. There is a sign-in log for anyone entering and exiting the property room, including MLEAC Assessors during this on-site. Access to the property room is properly restricted and alarmed.

There are several two-way lockers for officers to put large items of evidence/property into along with smaller lockers in which evidence is placed and secured until technicians remove the property, log the property, then place the property/evidence in the property lockers accessed by the property room officer for proper intake and storage.

The agency also has a large inside vehicle bay that can be secured to limit access in cases where a vehicle needs to be processed or for securing large items that cannot be secured in an evidence/property locker. These areas are alarmed. The agency has three storage areas available for valuable jewelry, money, and guns. There is a drug disposal policy in place to properly destroy drugs. The agency uses a crematorium located in Grand Rapids for the incineration of these items.

There are some items that come into the custody that the agency is not equipped to process. In those cases, the items are sent to the Michigan State Police (MSP) Crime Lab in Lansing, Michigan. This process is documented and items sent to the MSP lab are packaged according to MSP evidence packaging standards.

An appropriate policy for transmission and chain of custody is in place. The assessors were shown the procedure first hand from the collection of evidence from the evidence/property locker, to logging the item in the computerized evidence log.

All time-sensitive inspections, audits and inventories were conducted according to the established standard. No irregularities were identified. There were no changes in the property custodian during this assessment period.

Policies are in place for the proper notification of owners of property received and returned to them or to someone designated by the owner.

Juvenile Matters

The agency has established policies regarding juvenile status offenses, including runaway cases, unidentified children, and the safe delivery of newborns. There were no incidents where the agency needed to use Amber Alerts or the Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN). There are designated areas where juveniles can be placed for temporary holding or detention. Appropriate forms are used for the petitioning of juveniles to court. Parent notification policies and practices for the release of juveniles are present with appropriate documentation including time limits associated with juvenile processing and holding. Reporting requirements were also observed that comply with accreditation standards. The agency has several child car seats available for use as needed.

Special Investigations and Operations

The agency has a special investigations policy. The written directives are in compliance with accreditation standards. The agency is well organized in keeping records of information shared with or received from another agency. The agency has an appropriate deconfliction procedure in place.

Operational supervisors and detectives work together to keep each other informed regarding general investigations as well as special investigations or operations taking place.

The agency does not have a confidential informant policy because they do not utilize confidential informants and the agency received a waiver through MLEAC. Discussions were held regarding how development of vital information can catch an agency off-guard. The agency is in the process of developing a policy regarding confidential informants in the event of an unusual circumstance that would require action or further investigation.

Chapter 5 – The Arrestee/Detainee/Prisoner Handling Function:

Transporting/Processing/Holding of Arrestees/Detainees/Prisoners

The Meridian Township Police Department has established procedures for the transportation of arrested subjects, to include searching vehicles prior to the beginning of each shift, the end of each shift, and prior to and following any transport, and the securing of arrested subjects in restraints during transport. Patrol cars have been modified so the rear door handles and windows do not operate, and a safety barrier separates the rear compartment.

All custodial arrests are lodged at the Ingham County Jail. The Meridian Township Police Department has a processing area where arrestees can be given a breathalyzer test prior to being transported to the Ingham County Jail. The processing room is equipped with an emergency button that sounds an alarm indicating there is an emergency in the processing area. It is also their practice to have two officers in the processing room during processing. There is a secure sally port where lock boxes for weapons are installed and available for securing weapons prior to entering the processing room. Access to the processing room is controlled using a cypher lock. Officers have the ability to secure arrestees to the bench in the processing area.

G. Applied Discretion Compliance Discussion:

This section provides specific information on those standards found to be in compliance after on-site adjustments were made.

During this on-site, the agency had four standards in applied discretion.

Standard 1.2.1. Fiscal Control

ISSUE: The agency has no real fiscal control over the cash drawer that is at the front desk. The drawer is not locked and all staff could access it. While there, assessors found receipts that were not properly filled out and logged in the ledger.

AGENCY ACTION: The agency is in the process of working with their IT department to install a cash drawer connected to a computer. This would allow better access control and documentation of cash received.

Standard 1.9.7 Hazmat Training

ISSUE: Not all police personnel received Hazmat training up to the time of this assessment. The agency has since corrected this with the last officer receiving this training on December 25, 2019.

AGENCY ACTION: All officers have received the Hazmat training as of December 25, 2019.

Standard 2.4.1 Recruitment Plan

ISSUE: Lack of proofs with regard to recruiting efforts conducted throughout the year and a review of those efforts.

AGENCY ACTION: Proofs were added and a review of the Recruitment Plan efforts for 2019 and a look ahead to recruitment efforts in 2020 brings the agency into compliance.

Standard 3.7.2 Command Responsibilities

ISSUE: The agency has a comprehensive policy on the implementation of the Incident Command System, however, the agencies proofs do not show that this is being done.

AGENCY ACTION: The agency is developing a template that will be used create Operational Plans that conform to policy and accreditation standards.

H. Waivers of Standards:

This section provides specific information on those standards which qualified for waivers. Waivers are available to agencies when it is impossible to comply with a specific standard. A request to waive standard compliance must be made to the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police Accreditation Program Director in writing, on official agency letterhead, signed by the CEO. The following standards were granted non-applicable waiver:

Standard 2.6.1 Reserve/Auxiliary Officers Program
Standard 4.5.3 Using Confidential Sources

I. Standards Noncompliance Discussion:

The agency had no standards in noncompliance.

J. Future Performance / Review Issues:

Future reviews and analyses should be more comprehensive during the next assessment period. Most of the issues found during this assessment were related to minor File Management (highlighting, too many proofs or inaccurate date labeling). Generally, only one proof is necessary for each standard.

Some processing issues that were discussed should be considered for implementation before the next review. One example of this would be documentation of receipts at the front desk (Cadets receiving money for PBT) and at the Records Clerk window. Consider the purchase/use of a cash register at each location that would provide a more accountable approach to documenting cash transactions at those locations.

K. Summary and Recommendation:

After a thorough review of the files for compliance was conducted, including observations of compliance, and after interviews were conducted, it was determined that the Meridian Township Police Department is in compliance with all of the established accreditation standards, with the four exceptions and waivers noted. Accreditation is recommended.

David Livingston, Team Leader
Date: January 9, 2020

Reviewed and approved to be scheduled for a hearing before the MLEAC.



Program Director Neal Rossow
Date: January 15, 2020