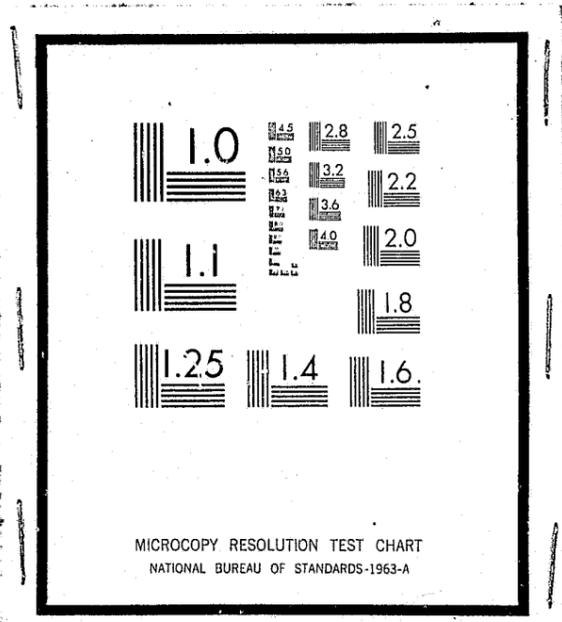


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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFERENCE SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20531**

6/16/77

Date filmed

LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION POLICE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT

SUBJECT: Pottstown, Pennsylvania; Records System Evaluation

REPORT NUMBER: 76-168

FOR: Pottstown, Pennsylvania, Police Department
 Borough Population: 25,355 (1970)
 Police Strength (Sworn): 40
 Total: 47 (full-time)
 Borough Area: 5.1 square miles

CONTRACTOR: Westinghouse Justice Institute

CONSULTANT: P. D. DeWitt
L. H. Palkovitz

CONTRACT NUMBER: J-LEAA-003-76

DATE: November 1976

39094

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FOREWORD

This request for Technical Assistance was made by the Pottstown, Pennsylvania, Police Department. The requested assistance was concerned with reviewing the Department's existing records management system and providing recommendations for improvement.

Requesting Agency: Pottstown Police Department,
Chief James E. Rodgers
Mr. John E. Vroman (Project Coordinator)

State Planning Agency: Governor's Justice Commission,
Mr. Thomas J. Brennan, Executive Director
Mr. Harold Borek (Southeast Region)

Approving Agency: LEAA Region III (Philadelphia),
Mr. Herbert Koppel, Systems Specialist

i. INTRODUCTION

The Borough of Pottstown and the surrounding townships (Lower Pottsgrove, Upper Pottsgrove, West Pottsgrove, East Coventry, and North Coventry) formed a police mutual assistance agreement in early 1974. This pact preceded a grant from the Governor's Justice Commission to explore the potential benefits of the regionalization of police services. A study for three of the jurisdictions resulted.* An important facet of this study was an analysis of the records systems and suggestions for areas of improvement, which included further computerization.

As a result of that study, the Pottstown Police Department requested proposals for the "development and implementation of a computer-linked records/management information system." Six proposals were received. At roughly the same time, the Department pursued Police Technical Assistance prior to making a decision on the six proposals.

While providing technical assistance, the Consultants met with the following personnel:

- Chief of Police James E. Rodgers.
- Mr. Joseph Banta, Borough Manager.
- Captain John J. Fedor.
- Officer John E. Vromen, Staff Services.
- Sergeant Donn H. Sommers, Detective Division.
- Officer Lynwood Youse, Traffic Safety.
- Detective George Geiger, Youth Services.
- Officer Donald Whitehead, Central Services.
- Ms. Cynthia Boughter, Executive Secretary.
- Ms. Gloria Kazimer, Secretary, Detective Division.
- Mr. Ronald Cranford, Data Processing Manager, Pottstown Schools.

The Consultants would also like to acknowledge the interest and advice of Mr. Harold Borek of the Governor's Justice Commission, Southeast Region.

*Cooperative Services Feasibility Study: Pottstown, Upper Pottsgrove, West Pottsgrove, Bartell Associates, Inc. March 1976.

Materials and other information considered by the Consultants included:

- The floorplan and location of workstations within the Borough Hall.
- The forms in use by the Police Department and the S.O.P. Manual.
- The record formats in the payroll and miscellaneous accounting applications already computerized.
- The Retention and Disposition Schedule for Records of Pennsylvania Municipalities, prepared by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.
- The recent, three-volume report prepared by Bartell Associates, Inc.
- Various baseline demographic, geographic, and economic data prepared by the COG and Borough to promote local and area development.
- Six proposals submitted recently for assisting the Borough in developing a sophisticated records/management information system.

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the Consultants are offered in later sections of this report.

2. UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEM

Pottstown, Pennsylvania, is a relatively compact borough located in a far-western corner of Montgomery County. Although reasonably remote from other urban areas (Reading and Philadelphia), an improved highway system may lead many commuters to live in the area over the next 10 years. This force may ultimately outweigh the sagging industrial vitality of the area and sustain a moderate population growth.

Although the Borough population has remained stable and static for almost a decade, the workload of the Police Department has not. Since 1968, the calls for service have more than doubled.* Other salient factors are that: (1) With few exceptions, most records of the Department date back only to about 1965-66; (2) space within the Borough Hall is now exhausted, with no capital program planned to enlarge the Borough facilities; and (3) the Borough is a participant in a Police Mutual Assistance Agreement and a member of the Pottstown Area Council of Governments (COG) -- regionalization of services may someday occur as interjurisdictional faith strengthens.

Bartell Associates, Inc. was commissioned by several members of the COG to perform a cooperative services feasibility study. The study's breadth took in much more than the "records problem," but its observations in that area were persuasive enough for this to become a topic of singular concern for the Pottstown Police Department.

After an initial period of Consultant familiarization with the records and personnel of the Department, the following general and specific issues emerged as topics for study:

- General:

- How responsive to the needs of the Department are the forms and records now used?
- What potential benefit may result from increased automation?
- How are the "problems" likely to worsen with time?

*In 1968, 4,915 general reports were filed, this increased to 10,294 by 1975; and the trend apparently continues in 1976.

- Specific:

- What should be done with the six pending proposals for records system improvement?
- What might be done to reorganize and more efficiently use available space?
- What is (or should be) the internal capability of the Department to manage records/systems improvement? (This is an approximate corollary to the first specific.)
- What next step should be taken by the Department?

These issues and others less tangible and defined, shaped the pattern of analysis for the Consultants' remaining onsite time.

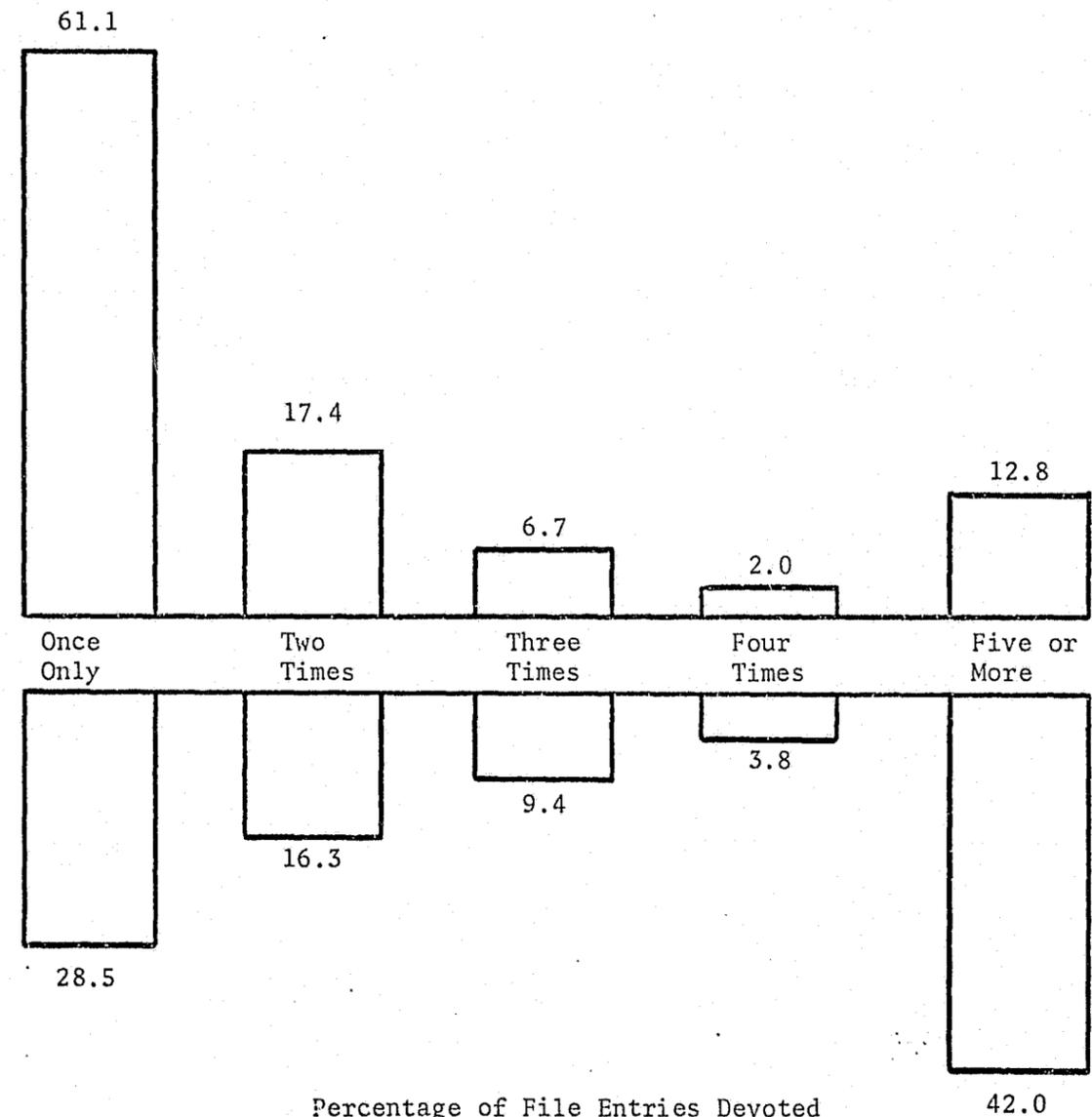
3. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

As a first iteration, a straight-forward mechanical analysis of the records, files, forms, and procedures was conducted to gather a basis for later analysis.* In general, the information gathered and used by the Department comes to rest in one of the following places:

- Master Name File -- Now has roughly 90,000 entries. Many entries represent multiple occurrences of same name (see Figure 3-1). Names may be of jurisdictions, establishments, institutions, or persons. Filed alphabetically by hand on 3- by 5-inch sheets of paper.
- General Report File -- About 1 year's worth (plus key cases), now about 11,000 entries, kept in the radio room. Older reports are removed to "archives." Filed by control number. In active cases, the records on file may not correspond to the portfolio built by detectives and others. Access to file is controlled by log and the placement of the file under surveillance.
- Accident Report File -- About 3 years' worth kept in the radio room. Filed by place of occurrence. Separate categories for fatal accidents and accidents that involve police vehicles.
- Arrest File -- About 7,000 folders, filed by arrest number. Recurring arrestees filed within folder by original number. Cross indexed by name and known alias.
- Juvenile Records -- Controlled by the detective assigned to the Youth Division. File volume small, but potentially volatile. About 500 juvenile contacts made yearly, many repeaters. There are 75 to 90 cases active at one time. There is a central juvenile name index in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, protected by passwords and other precautions.

*The inclusion of forms in this report would add unneeded bulk. They are essentially what one might expect to be developed from such guidelines as the FBI's Manual of Police Records.

Percentage of Names in File
by Their Frequency of Occurrence*



Percentage of File Entries Devoted
to Names by Frequency
(e.g., 42% of file is consumed by the 12.8%
of the names that occur five or more times)*

*Based upon a random sample of 319 index cards representing 149 names

Figure 3-1. Characteristics of Master Name File

- Traffic Citation File -- Maintained by the Traffic Safety Officer. Volume annually between 1,500 and 2,000. Filed by citation number, subdivided into paid and unpaid. Kept 2 to 3 years after paid.

A number of less massive files and administrative records do exist. Their contribution to a "records" problem is minor, however, and is not discussed in this report.

As a second iteration, the various file placements, accessibility and ease of use, storage problems, and growth potential were considered. Among observations of the Consultants were:

- The use of the radio room as the core location for the master name index, general report file, and accident report file creates a minor nuisance for users (because of separation from work stations).
- The master name index has the normal minor flaws that can be expected in a file maintained manually: Some misfiling, typographical errors and strike-overs, and multiple spellings and/or variations in the names (e.g., one local beer distributor appears in the file 10 times under five variations in the name).
- The location of files other than those in the radio room appear reasonable and convenient.
- The present practice of having the sole complete case file in the possession of the investigating detective until the case is closed runs the risk of losing that data.
- The present scheme for rotation of older records into inactive storage seems consistent with the demands of the Department.
- The Department's "archives" were moved recently from a garage to a locked classroom in a vacant, nearby school. Because of the move (and possible earlier disorganization), the records are now little more than piles of paper. The low level of use of these documents makes this a minor problem.

- Copies of various forms are made, as needed, on the Borough's copier. Access to this machine is limited to normal Borough business hours. Although the Consultants saw no unwarranted use of the copier, they understood that the Departmental allocation of reproduction costs is sometimes a delicate issue.
- The Borough and School District share an IBM System 3/10. The system is physically within the District's administrative building. The system may be upgraded in the near future, because of services provided other school districts. Police utilization of the system is minimal (some financial, payroll, parking ticket applications). Adequate machine time is now available and the equivalent of 1.3 programmer/analysts can be offered the Borough at no additional costs above the current cost sharing.

Another consideration during the analysis, but one of preeminent importance, was that of intended and planned uses of information by the Department. Significant factors from this viewpoint included:

- Establishment of the cost of maintaining a "man on the street". The present information base and accounting system make this a difficult figure to derive. A real question drove the point home when a neighboring jurisdiction asked the cost of "buying" a fulltime man. Similar information is obviously valuable when planning staffing levels and preparing budgets (even in the absence of external service requests).
- As a related point, the Department now collects significantly more detail in the daily reports than it uses. Such detail could support tabulations of hours spent by type of activity, by zone, by time of day, and so on.

Several other facts should be set to complete the basic background, against which this study was performed. The theme is one of records systems improvement and the potential for automation. The Bartell study and report offered general suggestions for an improvement program and hinted at the direct costs and benefits involved:

"The cost of implementing the total records system will vary depending on sophistication of equipment to be utilized for the retrieval of the information. At minimum the cost will be between \$5,500 and \$7,000 but could

exceed this if the computer was to be utilized. However, if properly designed, the record system can well give this kind of return in efficiency and time within the first year of operation."* (emphasis added)

Although unconfirmed, it is the opinion of the Consultants that the reasonableness of only a \$5.5 to \$7.0 thousand investment and the relative immediacy of payback prompted the Department to take another exploratory step -- The issuance of a very generalized RFP for the development and implementation of a "Records/MIS."

Meanwhile, along a parallel track, a request for Police Technical Assistance was running through its channels. In part, the final technical assistance specification took this form: "To review their records management system and make recommendations for a new system, probably automated." Such nuances lend weight to the assumption that such a solution was already taken by most parties to be a given, rather than one of many options to be considered.

The Consultants felt that the six proposals that came in response to the RFP proved surprising to the Department in at least one detail -- price. Although several of the proposals contained options and several prices, the average quote was approximately \$33,000. The highest quote (and possibly the best thought-through) was in excess of \$80,000.

The Police Management and Operations Divisions of the International Association of Chiefs of Police responded to the RFP. Their comments (with which the Consultants agree) make it clear that they were not willing to concede that automation was the clear solution:

- "An automated system of this degree of sophistication is extremely expensive. A prevalent misconception among police administrators is that a computerized system eliminates the need for a manual system. In most jurisdictions, this is not true."
- "Another frequent misconception among police administrators is that a computerized system reduces manpower and space requirements...a reduction in manpower is less common than the increased productivity of operational personnel."

The analysis could easily have overrun the boundaries defined for it, if the Consultants were to have pursued all loose ends. Limits, set by the time available and the probable irrelevance of much further explorations, curtailed the scope of the analysis and refocused it upon the factors outlined above. Events, which might tip or reverse conclusions of this study, include:

*From the Bartell report, Part III, page 27.

- An eventual regionalization of police services or, almost equivalently, an increasing reliance upon purchased police services by the neighboring townships.
- An unforeseen rapid growth in population, congestion, or "hot spots" (e.g., nightclubs) because of the Schuylkill Expressway or the power plant in Limerick.
- A grant, from the Governor's Justice Commission, that underwrites a major portion of an automated system's development costs, thus altering the local cost-benefit equation. (This might come to pass, in a not too farfetched scenario, if the Borough and several similar Pennsylvania jurisdictions shared in a technology transfer program -- a one-time "development" and multiple replications).

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is only fair to introduce this section with a major overall assessment -- in general, the records system of the Pottstown Police Department deserves a clean bill of health. There are no singular blemishes or problems in the system of recordkeeping that warrant a major overhaul. Conclusions and recommendations are presented below in the format introduced in Section 2.

4.1 General

4.1.1 Forms and Records Now Used

The forms and records now used appear generally to be both adequate for present Departmental needs and also to be handled and processed in a sensible manner. There are minor exceptions, noted below; however, these issues are ones of efficiency and beg the question of effectiveness. This underscores a residual concern of the Consultants, a concern about which conversation faltered when raised onsite: "What are the goals of the Department, how would success be measured, and what role should be played by an information/records system?" No consultant should usurp the policymaking or value judgments of the Borough or Department. Yet, without fixed reference points, towards what end should an optimum be sought? No comprehensive, long-range plan has been set forth for the Department.* Thus, the question "What would make this a better records system?" invites the reply "better for what?" The only yardstick available now for measuring improvement must be one of efficiency -- saving man-time and conserving resources.

- The General Report form should be considered for redesign, to offer a self-contained, abbreviated version (as suggested by Bartell). An alternative would be to create a miscellaneous incident report (incident numbers would be assigned as they are now) that enables the officer to complete the form rapidly. Such a form could have subsections for Pottstown's most frequent miscellaneous incident types, making the form less frustrating than the general report because of the relevance of the subsection entries (some things never seem to "fit right" on a general report). Subsections examples might include: Money escort, animal body removal, etc. The design objectives would be to reduce the time required to complete the

* Such a document has been defined and placed within an overall development and implementation process by the general RFP described earlier. This would be prepared by the "Borough Technical Committee."

form, to retain the same general dimensions of the present form (for filing), and to capture information equivalent to that contained on present form. To the maximum possible extent, the suggestions of the patrolmen should be solicited, considered, and incorporated.

- The General Report File is not yet large or awkward enough to benefit from reduction to some microform. Organization of the file and access to it seem well in-hand. However, there is a period of time, while a detective is working a case, that the General Report File is incomplete (does not reflect the portfolio developed by the detective). The individual detectives organize their own records pretty much at their own discretion. This has led in a few instances to lost or misplaced records, with little hope of recovery. A more structured filing system in the detective's office complex could prove beneficial -- a consolidated file, organized by incident number, rather than three or more sub-files. Copies of material would be held by the individual detectives. Copies could be made on-to paper with a distinctive color (e.g., blue). When a case is cleared (or unfounded), the original material would go to the General Report File and the (blue) copies inserted in the Detective File. This system, or an equally simple equivalent would minimize the danger of lost or misplaced information and enable another officer to find key information even when the assigned detective is out of the station.
- A separate form for stolen bicycles should be discontinued and, instead, be incorporated within the General Report's redesign.
- Traffic citations are prenumbered forms and are filed by that number. Access to that file by general incident number or by violator's name is impossible without referencing the name index or General Report File in the radio room. (An example of a by-name inquiry is when a stopped motorist pleads that this is his first offense; in such cases, the officer may request verification.) Although this certainly creates an inconvenience for the Traffic Safety Officer, no feasible

remedy is apparent. The Consultants were not able to assess the severity of this inconvenience.

- The Daily Activity Reports (Patrol and Detective Divisions) seem reasonable enough, although apparently not designed with subsequent data collection in mind (see Section 4.1.2).

4.1.2 Automation Benefits

An advantage uncommon for Departments the size of Pottstown's is the availability of significant data processing time and resources. This advantage could, perhaps, best be used in a gradual program of improvement, rather than in a more radical, dramatic approach. Because of the extent of Departmental operations, applications such as computer-aided dispatch or sophisticated information retrieval systems are not practical today. In addition, there are a number of major problems that could arise if a sophisticated law enforcement information system is applied to a unit that is not dedicated solely for that purpose. Yet, there are opportunities for unburdening some manual analysis tasks, for example:

- The Daily Activity Reports can be a "rich" source document; these records in machine-readable form can feed not only the payroll system but also provide invaluable data for cost studies (pricing police services) and for assessing the effectiveness of deployment strategies, etc. Increased use of information from these reports seems the most painless path towards Departmental experimentation with automation.
- The Department is now close to the threshold point (or somewhat over) where automation can truly save time in the preparation of Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). This application should be considered if (and when) the General Report is redesigned. Computer programs for this application should be sought from other jurisdictions, for the design guidance they would provide, if not outright use.

4.1.3 Future Requirements

The future requirements can be estimated by extending today's conditions and assuming that recent trends will continue for perhaps another 5 years. In a very sketchy form, then, the characteristics of the Department in 1981 may be developed from such data as shown in Appendix A (and many simplifying assumptions).

By 1981, it is likely that the Department's budget will reach \$984,000 (plus inflation) and will employ six more officers. Calls for police services (of all types) will rise close to 50 percent. The types of crimes (now showing strong upward trends) that will consume most investigative and preventative time will be burglary and larceny-theft. The clearance rate (by arrest) for serious crime will be in the range of 50 to 52 percent, given the projected crime rate and manpower.

Space will become a more pressing problem and some resolution should be found within the next 2 to 3 years.

Accidents, moving citations, parking tickets, and similar miscellaneous reports will remain at present levels.

The General Report File will be roughly one-half again as large as it is now and the total file size (including older, less active records) will have doubled. Storage should still pose no problems.

The UCR forms may take as much as 50-percent more time to complete if the projected increase and composition of crimes is reasonably accurate. While only marginally justifiable today, automated assistance in statistical tabulations should be scheduled for implementation by the end of 1978.

4.2 Specific

4.2.1 Pending Proposals

These six proposals were submitted in response to a vague problem definition in the RFP. In essence, the responses amount to statements of qualifications for each of the bidders. The prices quoted are for estimated levels of effort; the basis for these estimates varied widely from bidder to bidder. The prices cannot be compared, because no common denominator exists. The variety of responses is not at all unusual in view of the very general RFP.

The Consultants suggest that no award be made at this time. The experience, however, has provided some lessons and directions for any further procurement steps:

- The Department has now firmed up its conception of the role to be played by a chosen firm (i.e., a "consultant" or "state-of-the-art advisor" as opposed to a turn-key contractor with packaged solutions). This leaning was expressed (lightly) in the RFP, but now

appears to be a much stronger conviction. This distinction should be made clearly in any future RFP.

- This clarification should have the effect of reducing quoted prices, if new bids were to be taken, for the "risks" of producing tangible products is assumed by the Borough.
- The scope of services to be acquired (if any) should be limited initially to systems analysis and design (Phases I through III of the Development and Implementation Process, as defined by the original RFP).

4.2.2 Space Utilization

People and records take up space -- the Pottstown Police Department has now consumed every nook and cranny available in the Borough Hall. Particularly crowded are:

- The office shared by three detectives.
- The Read Off room.
- The double office complex serving two captains, the Duty sergeant and the Staff Services officer.

There appears presently to be no practical escape from the space dilemma. The Borough Hall is full, no new construction is planned, and radical interior remodeling seems also infeasible. Some space, in a nearby vacant school, is now used as a repository for older records. The movement of part, but not all, of the Department to a similar facility will create as many new problems as the move solves. More feasible would be to persuade the printing and engineering/inspection functions to relocate, thus opening space in the Borough Hall.

4.2.3 Internal Systems Capability

A thread running through many conversations while the Consultants were onsite was whether the Department could (should) develop an internal systems capability -- or, instead, seek to purchase outside help. Within limits, the Consultants feel that a local/internal capability should be nurtured. Factors to consider are that:

- "Problems" faced by the Department are not of such an urgency that precipitous action is necessary.

Thus, the Department has the time available to assemble the "Borough Technical Committee" and to define a multi-year plan rather than rushing to extinguish brush-fires.

- With the long-range plan in hand, the Department then may, of course, reconsider its desire for an internal capability. The final decision is one reasonably postponed.
- The Borough should retain a consultant (as described in 4.2.1) but employ the consultant more as a tutor than as a guru.
- The Borough has a convenient arrangement with the School System, sharing a data processing facility. One programmer (now paid with CETA funds), or part of his time, might be assumed by the Department to ensure a continuing programmer for police applications.

4.2.4 Next Steps to be Undertaken

There are a number of detailed, even minute, steps that must be taken by the Department to reach a plateau from which further action is appropriate. These are offered below in a rough checklist format, not necessarily in a chronological sequence:

- A systems committee (perhaps as a subcommittee of a larger "Borough Technical Committee") should be assembled immediately. A small group is more likely to be effective at this time. Typical members (chosen from those met by the Consultants) would be: Vroman, Cranford, and Fedor. First steps of this committee would include:
 - Gracefully kill the six pending proposals.
 - Contacting other similar-sized jurisdictions and Police Departments. To be contacted are:
 - i. Those jurisdictions in Pennsylvania that have reorganized and disposed of records under the State's record retention guidelines. The Pottstown Police Department, alone, hasn't sufficient justification for the costs

of a microform (film, fiche, etc.) system. The Consultants weren't able to examine the records of the entire Borough. The guidelines seem to promise some level of technical assistance availability from the Historical and Museum Commission, this could be pursued for the Borough as a whole.

ii. Police Departments (particularly those in Pennsylvania) using an IBM System 3. The purpose of this quick survey will be to assess the extent to which existing forms and computer programs are available. Although the shared System 3 may soon be replaced by another larger system (to meet school needs) this should not be a deterrent, for the DP employees will quickly become conversant with the techniques for translating from one machine to another.

- The systems committee should identify the source(s) of funding for any systems redevelopment or consultant expense.
- A management committee (perhaps made up by Chief Rodgers, Capt. Fedor, and Sgt. Sommers) should sketch a plan for anticipated operations over (say) a 5-year period. From a management perspective, the statistics and measures of effectiveness deemed desirable (even the blue-sky ones) should be tentatively set down.
- A Borough space committee (Department Heads or designates) should explore and develop several options for solving the space "dilemma."
- The Borough Technical Committee should assemble the subcommittees' draft reports and push forward into the design phase. The Governor's Justice Commission should be looked towards for help. Another, more limited, RFP could reasonably be issued at this time.

- The time budgeted for the preliminary steps outlined above need not be more than two calendar months. These steps are to define problems and unearth possible options, not to choose answers. There may be a tendency to overstudy the problems. At the time of the Consultants' visit, the future objectives of the Department lacked clarity, yet the Department should not over-react and launch a too-long agonizing study, when their system is essentially in such sound shape.



APPENDIX A

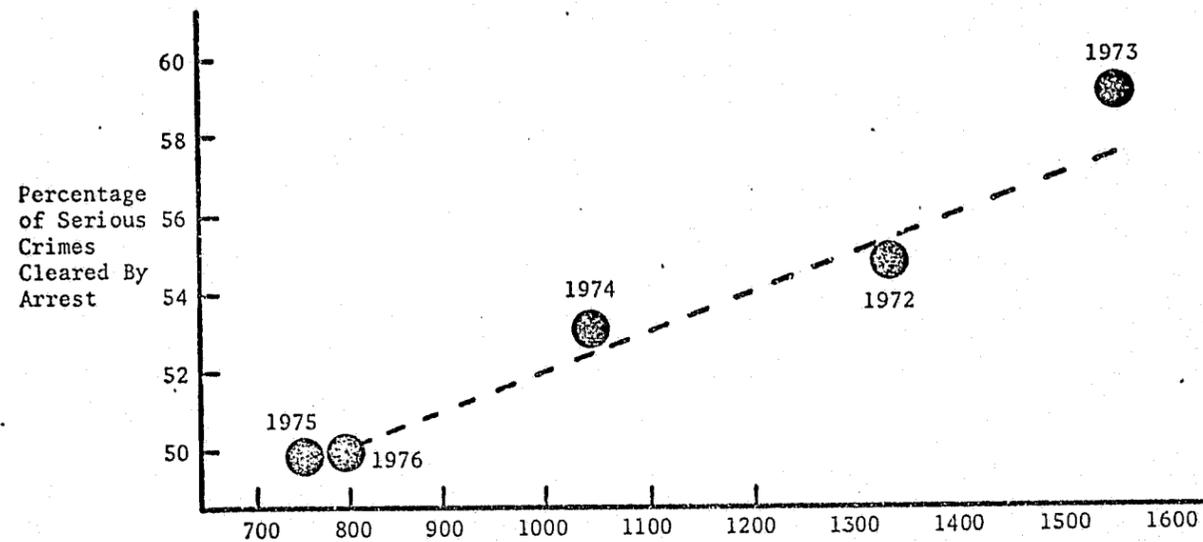
Pottstown Police Department
Projected Data

Pottstown Police Department Historical Profile

	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>Est. 1976</u>
Homicide:					
Murder	2	0	1	2	*
Neg. Mansl.	0	0	0	1	4
Rape	7	5	11	12	6
Robbery	53	30	49	43	70
Assault:					
Aggravated	30	26	44	44	54
Simple	142	91	119	73	154
Burglary	183	185	316	429	434
Larceny:					
\$50 and up	210	207	317	400	458
Under \$50	276	247	321	380	272
Auto Theft	57	42	47	88	52
% Serious Crime Closed by Arrest	55	59	53	50	50
Parking Citations ('000s)	28	30	24	24	*
Moving Citations ('000s)	2.6	2.3	1.9	1.6	*
Traffic Accidents	982	974	962	921	996
Department Budget (in \$'000s)	547	623	715	731	846

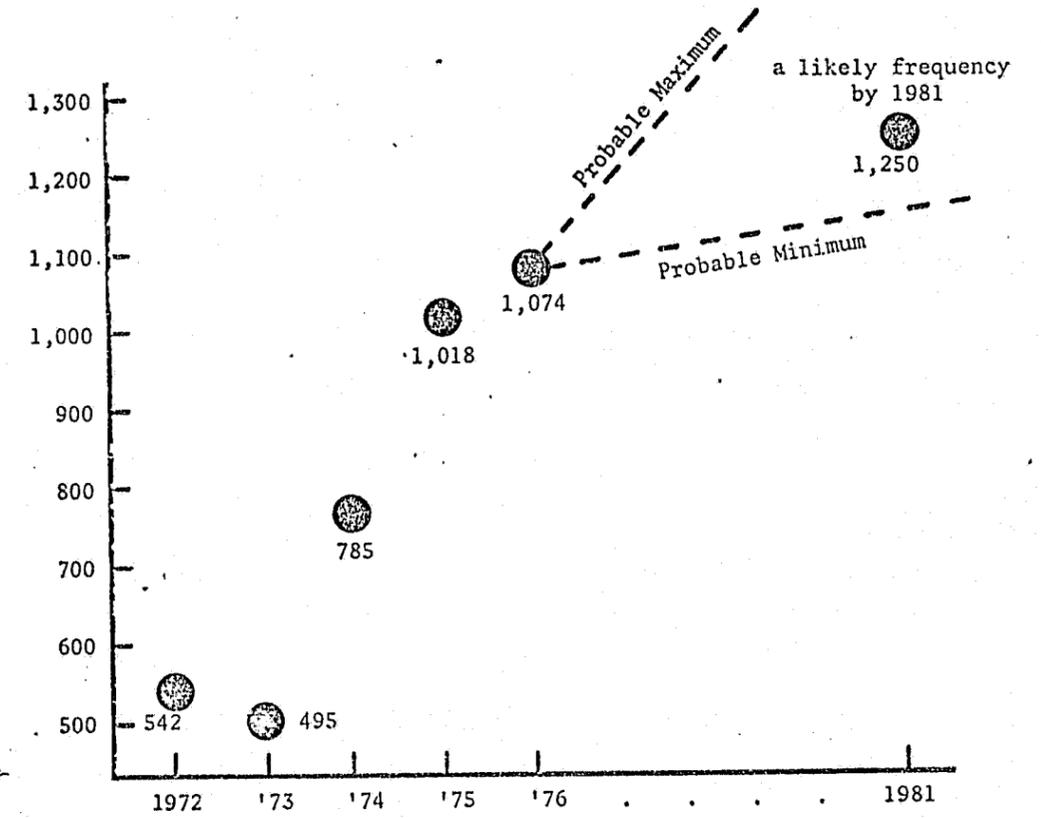
*Remain constant

Sources: 1976 Budget Statistical Report, Internal mid-year reports (1976),
and Bartell study.



Police Department Budget (in 1976 Dollars)
Per "More Serious" Crimes

Frequency
of "More
Serious"
Crime



A Simple Forecast of Crime
For 1981 -- Forecast Made
Only to Anticipate Paperwork
Load, Not for Use Outside of
the Context of this Report

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