

34225 BRIDGEVIEW DR. N.E.  
KINGSTON, WASHINGTON 98346

Phone (360) 638-1179

Fax (360) 638-1779

Cell (360) 509-1333

E-mail : [mpendleton@telebyte.com](mailto:mpendleton@telebyte.com)

[pendletonconsultingllc@msn.com](mailto:pendletonconsultingllc@msn.com)

[www.pendleton-consulting.com](http://www.pendleton-consulting.com)

# **An Organizational Assessment and Development Report**

**On  
The Police Department  
City of Bainbridge Island, WA**

**By  
Michael R. Pendleton Ph.D.**

**August 2013**

## Executive Summary

The city commissioned an organizational assessment, often referred to as a “management study”, to assist the in-coming Chief of Police and other city leaders in their efforts to improve the police department.

**Methodology:** This assessment was based upon three primary data sources:

- Face to face interviews with police employees, citizens and city leaders
- The review of numerous documents
- Observation of Police-Community Town Hall meeting

**Findings and conclusions:**

1. Police employees report a lower than desired organizational health and effectiveness rating and lower than desired working climate rating.
2. The department is experiencing low unity of command reflecting poor upper leadership, poor first line supervision and poor communication within the organization.
3. The department has inadequate accountability systems.
4. There is “split community support” for the police department.
5. There are long-standing unresolved allegations of incidents of police misconduct and retaliation.
6. The problems facing the police department have been known for some time by various city leaders without an effective response.
7. The police department has some very solid strengths and attributes that are masked by chronic problems within the department.

**Recommendations:**

1. The Chief lead a collaborative process to develop and implement a leadership development strategy.
2. Fully develop and implement a police accountability system comprised of both internal affairs and the city performance evaluation system.

3. Develop a formal Police Commission of citizens with the role of reviewing the internal affairs activities of the department, advising the Chief of Police and City Manager on key police issues, and assist the police department with outreach to the full community.
4. The Chief of Police conduct an annual performance evaluation compliance audit and report the findings of the audit to the City Manager.
5. Develop and implement an organizational development plan that addresses the numerous issues identified in this and other recent assessments of the police department.
6. Immediately begin planning for relocating the police department to be either within or very near City Hall.

## **Introduction:**

It has been determined that the Bainbridge Island, Washington Police Department could benefit from an organizational assessment and development process. To facilitate this process the city commissioned an organizational assessment, often referred to as a “management study”, to assist the in-coming Chief of Police and other city leaders in their efforts to improve the police department. In this respect, the primary audience for this report is the leaders of the City of Bainbridge Island. This report documents the assessment process, data, findings, conclusion and subsequent recommendations on how to address key management and organizational issues.

## **Assessment Methodology**

This assessment was based upon three primary data sources:

1. Face to Face Interviews: Interviews with police personnel, city leaders, and community members identified by the city leadership to have knowledge about the police department were conducted. Police personnel interviews were guided by a set of key questions. City leader and community interviews were generally guided by key questions but were allowed to flow freely based upon the participants knowledge and points of view on topics they wanted to discuss. All active police personnel participated in this study. In addition police personnel no longer with the department participated as identified by city leadership.
2. Document Review: the following documents were reviewed:
  - Numerous un-solicited communications from concerned-involved citizens
  - 44 page summary of numerous allegations of abuse by police officers to include specific details of incidents and related processes.
  - Department Monthly activity reports
  - Department Crime Statistics
  - 7 months of Citizen Surveys conducted by police department
  - Results of citizen survey conducted by citizen group Islanders for Collaborative Policing
  - State of Department Report issued in 2000
  - Letter to the Washington State Attorney General
  - Memo: Lieutenants Expectations: 2009

- Framework for 2012-2020 Police Department Strategic Plan
- Pailca Report: Review of Policies and Procedures for Intake and Resolution of Citizen Complaints of Police Conduct- 2011
- 2012 Washington Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs LEMAP review of the police department.
- Policy compliance audit of all police performance evaluations

3. Police-Community meeting: Attendance-observation of Police-Community Town Hall type meeting.

### **Police Interview Data**

**1. Organizational Health and Effectiveness Rating (scale of 1-10 where 10 is Excellent): Participants were asked to rate the police department and provide reason(s) for their ratings.**

Rating: 5.0

Sd: .93

**Reasons for the rating: (the data is presented in the order of most frequently stated to least frequently stated)**

1. Inadequate First Line Supervision
  - Lack of leadership, motivation, performance, productivity
  - Poor communication between Lt, with Chief, with officers
  - Self oriented-back stabbers
  - Low supervision and accountability
2. Inadequate Leadership at the top:
  - poor past leaders and significant turnover
  - tough community activist politics running department
  - uncertain future
  - Out dated policies
  - Not moving forward
3. Low Morale
  - low trust
4. High attrition rate

5. High Potential
  - great clearance rate
6. Single listed items:
  - Low officer productivity
  - Civilian employees treated like second class citizens
  - Conflict between sworn personnel
  - Very recent leaders (CM and acting Public Safety Director) turning things around

**2. The organizational strengths of the police department: Participants were asked to identify the strengths of their police department.**

1. Good officers and staff:
  - Experienced personnel
  - Wide range of skill sets
  - Lt's have held it together
  - Made great cases and clearance rates
  - High education level
  - Civilian staff is great
2. Officer dedication:
  - Committed to doing the right thing
  - Some officers still dedicated to the hunt
  - Lots of enthusiasm in the department
  - Still provide great service even in bad times
  - Everyone has stepped up
  - We have hope
  - Resilient -we bounce back
3. Good relationship with the community:
  - Community largely supportive of us
  - Give public respect and listen
  - Positive interaction with the community
  - Officers are imbedded in the community
4. Officer cohesiveness:
  - We pull together

- Good communication between officers
- Good officer safety
- We have each other's back
- A good set of core officers
- They all want the PD to be a 10
- Adaptable: we can change

5. Nice size organization and community:

- We are flexible
- A lot of discretionary time to spot trends, contact community and do data analysis
- We can have a big impact on the community

6. Benefits:

- Paid well
- Time off
- Take home cars
- Opportunity for training

7. Interim Public Safety Director:

- Turning us around
- New policies
- Set goals

**3. The most pressing issues facing the police department: Participants were asked to identify the most pressing issue(s) facing the police department. More than one issue could be provided by each participant.**

1. First line leadership:

- Poor role models
  - Integrity
  - Apathy
  - Slacking
  - Un-professional
  - Ignore assignments
  - Not on road
- Management
  - Lack of consistency

- Resistance to change
- Micro-management
- Schedule management
- No performance expectations
- One Guild for both Lt.'s and Rank and File
- Retaliation
- Can't file complaint against supervisor
- Lt.'s President and Vice President
- Afraid to speak-up
- Self oriented-own agenda

2. Accountability:

- No performance/ standards expectations
- No consequences for bad behavior
- No consequences for doing nothing
- Lt. favoritism
- No one watching us
- Lt's blow off assignments

3. Communication:

- Miss-information-inconsistent message
- Lt.'s don't communicate with each other
- Communication in all directions poor
- Need better communication-rapport with Prosecutor
- Lt's trying-communicating more under acting Public Safety Director

4. General Organization:

- No clarity, organizational strategy, confusing
- Low staffing response
- No pro-active training plan
- Things fall through the cracks

5. General Leadership:

- No vision, goals or measures of success
- No support from government leaders, not trusted by the council, not important to the council or community

- Community direction for PD is unclear or established by vocal minority of community

6. Interactions with community:

- Need better relationship with media
- Quick to judge
- Relations with majority is great
- Relations with vocal minority is poor

7. Police facility and equipment:

- People feel degraded
- Ant infested
- Rotting walls
- Gerbil holes
- No collective meeting space
- Not secure
- No locker room
- In-adequate storage
- Out-growing vault
- Equipment getting old (cars)
- Shows administration does not care about us

8. Morale:

- Low
- Keeping head down

**4. Community-Police Department Relationship Rating (scale of 1-10 where 10 is Excellent): Participants were asked to rate the community-police department relationship and provide reason(s) for their ratings.**

Rating: 6.9

Sd: .1.13

**Reasons for the rating:**

1. Majority of community is supportive-positive relationship:

- Police surveys are generally positive
- A lot more thank you(s) than complaints

- We still have work to do
- Recent events have hurt us
- Contacts are generally good

2. Poor relationship with a vocal minority:

- Negative media stories and bloggers
- More liberal community with an anti-police view
- Activist community
- With increased interaction we have won over some
- Need positive contacts to build trust
- Community of entitlement don't like authority
- We do a poor job of getting our message out
- Perception we are keystone cops
- Not as involved as we should be
- Recent shooting and turnover events hurt us with the community

**5. Working climate within the police department rating (scale of 1-10 where 10 is Excellent): Participants were asked to rate the working climate within the police department and provide reason(s) for their ratings.**

Rating: 5.2

Sd: .1.9

1. General stationhouse:

- In general we get along well, people are friendly is much improved over last year, love coming to work
- A lot of tension, frustration, anxiety about unknown
- Depends on where in organization you work
- Low morale, drama of the day
- Work load not shared

2. First Line Supervision:

- Discord between Lt's and officers
  - Retaliation
  - Officers don't like being supervised
  - Not a lot of positive feedback from supervisors
  - Officers override Lt's directives

Senior officers want to move up no room  
Scheduling issues  
Back stabbing-controlling Lt

3. Recent events-Low Morale
  - Keeping head down
  - Officers feel beat down
4. Community Interaction
  - Very positive

**6. Department communication rating (scale of 1-10 where 10 is Excellent):  
Participants were asked to rate the communication within the police  
department and provide reason(s) for their ratings.**

Rating: 4.8  
Sd: .1.6

**Reasons for the rating:**

1. First line supervisor communication:
  - Schedule change don't know why and nature
  - Schedule changed and Lt.s don't tell each other
  - Don't pass information down to officers
  - Don't set forth expectations
2. No Shift Briefing or Pass Down:
  - 8 hour shift prevents briefing
  - Can't meet in one room
  - Don't come to station
3. Pockets of communication:
  - Interim Public Safety Director facilitates communication
  - Administration/civilian staff are great with communications
4. Officer to officer:
  - Day to day is good

## City Leadership Interview Data

### 1. Leadership and first line supervision is in-adequate

- Basic leadership and management skill sets are lacking
- Poor unity of command
  - Lt's not in sync with past Chief(s)
  - Rank and file not in sync with Lt's
  - Lt's in Guild and are the presiding officers
- Guild undermines management
  - Lt's led movement against last Chief
  - Lt's resist and not follow-through on accountability system-manual

### 2. Police intimidate and retaliate against those that are viewed as threat or not supportive.

- City Council accounts and police activism events perceived as intimidation
  - Attend meetings in mass uniformed presence
  - 911 hang-up
  - Interacting with Council member in uniform after meetings
  - "Hunter" blog
  - Press coverage of allegations of officer following Council Member home after meetings.
  - Guild taking ads out in paper to influence Council decisions
- Community stories and rumors of intimidation (see below)
  - Allegations of linkage of police officer(s) to women suicides
  - "I know you I have run your plates numerous times"
  - Allegations of rape and/or sexual assault
- E-mail from Lt. perceived as a threat not to participate fully or candidly in the interviews for this study.

### 3. Police accountability and related systems is poor

- I.A. system is compromised
  - Not used as it should be
  - Missing files
  - A history of telling complainants to deal directly with offending officer.
- No consequences for bad behavior

Sense that rank and file is untouchable

Performance measures needed

- System needs to be up-graded or implemented

“Have a system-if they use it”

Lt’s directed to develop IA manual but did not

Citizen oversight is badly needed

#### **4. Persistent rumors and/or stories of poor police actions and behaviors**

-Two suicide deaths of women who were allegedly linked to officer(s)

-Police use of force encounters with existing or former city employees

-Rumors or stories of excessive force never fully investigated-they linger

-Need a DOJ type of investigations of the specific allegations to put them to rest.

#### **5. Policing philosophy and practice**

-More of a “SWAT” philosophy than a community policing philosophy.

-Some officers known to escalate rather de-escalate situations

-No walking beats or required community service

-Want to see more interaction with the community

#### **6. Community relations and views of police**

- Most have little interaction and are supportive

- Fewer more informed/involved are not supportive or mistrust the police.

Appearance of non-professionalism

Appearance of abuse of power

Many involved with police seem not to have a good experience.

- Want more collaborative involvement between the police and the community.

#### **7. General views and topics**

-Not a healthy organization

-Building is terrible and training is not adequate

-Mission is not to serve and protect but “One mission-one team” all about the police and not the community.

-Low morale and questionable integrity

## Community Interview Data

### 1. Community Support of Police

- Majority of Citizens are supportive but not involved
- 1/3 supportive, 1/3 indifferent, 1/3 dislike
- 80% of the noise comes from 3% of the people
- 60% to 70% support the police
- Many citizens simply not paying attention

### 2. Community Concern or Dislike of the Police

- Significant but small number of people (200-600) paying attention and have concerns.
- 30% of community dislike the police
- Un-forgiving public
- Liberal anti-authority community

### 3. General Community Concerns

- Some women in community fear the police
- Lack of trust:
  - Youth and Police (don't call police to solve problems)
  - Women and Police
- Cultural conflict between wealthy residents and working class police.
- Police and community are disconnected.
  - Police are isolated
  - Police are inward focused
- Police not seen as part of city government-shabby Building

### 4. Community Incidents and Events Reflecting on Police

- Highly publicized police shooting highlighting mental health issues-training
- Highly publicized allegations of police intimidation of elected official
- Highly publicized leadership issue in police department
- Long standing rumors of events suggesting police misconduct
- 911 hang-ups
- Perceived conflict of interest and lack of leadership on local Gun Club issues

## 5. Professionalism in Police Department

- Low unity of command
  - Chief of Police disconnected from police department
  - History of Lt's undermining past Chief
  - Lt's in-subordinate to Chief
  - No cohesive leadership team in the police department
  - "us vs. them" view between various segments of department
- Climate of rule breaking with no consequences
- Seen as Keystone cops

## 6. No articulated Bainbridge Island Philosophy-Model of Policing.

- Special nature and needs of B.I. not defined then matched with a recruitment-hiring model. Such elements of a model might include:
  - Wealthy parents
  - Anti-authority liberals
  - Youth who have access to money
  - "Opinionated I know better community"
  - Quick to lawyer-up
  - Highly educated
- Special features of a B.I. policing model might include:
  - formal action as last resort
  - Off the record approach
  - A coaching-mentoring approach to youth
  - Stress and advertize to community high formal education for officers
  - extensive and on-going training

## **Community Suggestions for New Chief to Improve the Effectiveness of the Police Department**

### 1. Relations with the community

- Be collaborative and include the community
- Build people based relationship with the community

- Create multiple forums for interactions with the various segments of the community
- Deal with past and the lack of trust. Rumors and past stories need to be laid to rest.

**2. Communications and community involvement**

- Establish ways for citizens to provide input to the Chief
- Use the media strategically to communicate with the community

**3. Accountability and organizational development**

- Don't be afraid to change things in the organization
- Establish a citizens review-accountability process
- Hire and develop highly educated officers and market their accomplishments
- Connect directly with the officers

**Document Review Data**

1. Low/poor internal accountability systems and practice: Internal affairs system has flaws that create a "chilling effect" on receiving and investigating complaints against officers.

- L's in same guild as officers-conflict of interest suppresses complaints
- Allegations of refusal to accept complaints and/or substantial barriers to filing a complaint (fear of retaliation)
- Perception that no-one is looking into chronic allegations of serious/criminal behavior of selected officers
- Missing files and poor document security on key cases related to long standing allegations of abuse
- In-subordination by some officers that are openly ignored
- Lexipol IA system remains un-adopted

2. Significant levels of concern among involved/informed Community over selected officer(s) behavior that have not been investigated and/or addressed.

- numerous examples of alleged officer use of force violations
- allegations of officer assaults of citizens
- examples of alleged officer retaliation against citizens

- examples of law suits against officers/ city
  - significant level of negative views/impressions of the police department
3. Low unity of command
    - In-adequate or poor first line supervision
    - Disconnection and/or discord between upper management (Chief) and first line supervisors.
    - Disregard of direction from Chief by first line supervisors
    - Heavy handed leadership style that alienated first line supervisors
    - Lack of a long range plan to guide the police department
  4. Chronic history of concerns and inadequacies that have gone unaddressed
    - Allegations of selected officer abuse of citizens
    - Building and equipment in shambles and/or inadequate
  5. Majority of citizens report satisfaction with police performance

## **Assessment Findings and Conclusions**

**1. The police department is viewed by employees to have lower than desired health and effectiveness rating. 5.0 and a lower than desired working climate rating. 5.2 on a scale of 1-10 where 10 is excellent and 1 is the worst.**

The rating reflects, in part, low morale, a tarnished image based on much recent bad press, poor leadership and supervision and a general view that the police department is viewed as a second class citizen within the city organizational community. While officers generally get along, there remains significant tension, frustration within the work environment.

**2. The department is experiencing low unity of command. Low unity of command is characterized by the following:**

- No defined philosophy, vision, mission or strategic plan
- No articulated performance expectations

- Poor upper leadership (recently improved during the tenure of the acting Director of Public Safety)
- Poor first line supervision-inconsistency
- Discernible disconnection among-between leaders and supervisors
- Low-poor communication (rating of 4.8 on 10 point scale) within department
- History of supervisor undermining Chief of Police
- Lt.'s in same labor guild as rank and file

**3. The police department has in-adequate accountability systems and performance expectations characterized by the following:**

- Compromised IA system files
- Failure to implement Lexipol
- No consequences for poor behavior
- Lt.s in the past have conducted IA investigations yet in same guild as rank and file
- Process creates "chilling effect" on citizens filing complaints
- No one looking at bad behavior
- No citizen based role/ outside entity role in accountability system
- No visible link between formal performance expectations and performance evaluations and subsequent consequences.
- Significantly out of compliance with city performance evaluation policy

**4. There is "split community support" of the police determined by the level of involvement and knowledge of the Bainbridge Island Police.**

The general citizenry and those with casual and/or infrequent contact with the police have a much more favorable view of the police particularly when polled on general satisfaction. In part this general view seems to mask the contrasting views of a significant sub-component of the community.

In stark contrast are the views of the police among a smaller group of citizens, who by direct experience, profession and/or detailed study, have more knowledge of the police. This segment of the community has very negative views and/or fear of the police on the Bainbridge Island. While lesser in number than the more general population, this segment of the community appears to represents a significant number of people. This

split seems to be further defined based upon gender. More women than men are found in this group and are fearful of the police.

**5. There are long-standing unresolved allegations or in some cases, undisputed incidents of police misconduct and retaliation.**

There are numerous alleged incidents known and recounted by numerous people, including police officers, of police misconduct that has gone unresolved or not investigated. Many of these incidents are linked to other incidents involving police leading to the perception of, if not actual, retaliation and/or intimidation by police against citizens who have complained against them or acted in ways perceived as against the interests of the police. Accounts of perceived intimidation of city leaders were recounted during this study and have had significant impacts on perceptions of the police. In fact during the course of this study, communication by a police supervisor to subordinates was perceived by many as intimidating and an attempt to stifle full participation in this project.

**6. Many of the police problems detailed both here and in other recent reports have been known for some time by various city leaders but were seemingly not addressed in an effective way.**

Concerns with the inadequate police facility, safety equipment, poor communication, poor equipment, inadequate training, out of date policy and procedures, and problems with “public perception” were of documented concern for over ten years.

**7. The police department has some very solid strengths and attributes that have been masked if not underutilized by chronic problems.**

The majority of officers seem committed to doing the right thing. There is a yearning for effective leadership and direction. There remains an undercurrent of optimism and dedication that drives many officers. Many if not most officers have a very positive relationship with the community as indicated by virtually all the community members that participated in this study. There is a foundation of excellent investigation and general policing skills combined with a high level of experience within the department. Police personnel seem well educated and highly intelligent.

## **Recommendations**

**1. The Chief of Police lead a collaborative process to develop and implement a leadership development strategy. This strategy would be reviewed and approved by the City Manager and would include but not be limited to the following:**

- Bainbridge Island Philosophy of Policing
- Vision, mission and long range strategic plan
- Leadership and management performance expectations
- Plan for separating Lt's from rank and file labor guild
- Individual performance plans for each Lt. linked both to individual development plans AND successful implementation or not of work plans (see below).
- Work plans for each working unit to include performance measures and active auditing strategies

**2. Fully develop AND implement the police accountability system comprised of both an internal affairs and performance evaluation component. This system should include but not be limited to the following:**

- Adopt and implement Lexipol system
- Provide for multiple non-police locations for the filing of citizen complaints. This system should include non-sworn police personnel trained and qualified to take complaints.
- Take/investigate all citizen complaints including anonymous complaints.
- Assign non-guild management personnel to investigate I.A./citizen complaints.
- Implement fully the city performance evaluation system for all employees.
- Design and implement a police department specific 360 evaluation system with an anonymous participation process.

**3. Develop a formal Police Commission made-up of Bainbridge Island citizens representing various sub-communities and/ or professions. The role of this commission would include but not be limited to the following:**

- Have a formal role in the review of, findings, and discipline associated with Internal Affairs complaints/investigations.

- Advise the City Manager and Chief of Police on key police issues as determined by one or all of the above parties.
- Provide a forum for citizen communication and involvement in policing issues.
- Assist the Chief of Police in the design and implementation of a citizen outreach and involvement program.

**4. The Chief of Police conduct an annual performance evaluation compliance audit and prepare a report to the City Manager to include but not limited to the following:**

- Compliance of the police department with city performance evaluation policy and procedure.
- Linkage of the annual performance evaluation with the department professional development plan for police personnel to include both personal development and linkage to unit work plans (see above).
- Linkage of the annual performance evaluation to the development of first line supervisors in the police department.
- Linkage to the internal 360 evaluation system (see above)

**5. Develop and implement a specific organizational development plan that would include but not be limited to the following:**

- Structured communication forums and methods such as shift briefings, and all hands meetings etc.
- A specific department wide training plan
- An active auditing system or organizational behavior such as citizen surveys, direct supervisor follow-ups on calls, compliance audits of directives given by upper management, etc.
- Hiring strategy that reflects the organizational policing philosophy and staffing needs.
- Succession plan for personnel retirements and/or vacancies
- Identify and reward exemplary employee behavior in the rank and file.
- Specific performance expectations for rank and file
- Linkage of performance expectations to individual performance evaluations.
- A police-community communication and interaction plan to address the communities need to know about and work with their police department and related activities.

**5. The city begin immediately to plan for re-locating the police department near or within city hall.**