

CGPD *from A1*

As of July 1, the Cottage Grove Police Department (CGPD) will employ a total of 18 sworn officers and the department is appropriated about \$3 million next fiscal year for police operations.

Comparatively, Eugene Police Department employs nearly 200 officers and operates on a budget of about \$68 million.

Despite the vast personnel and funding differences between them, Cottage Grove Police Chief Scott Shepherd sees The Grove as having the kind of advantage over bigger departments that comes naturally with small-town communities.

“Their relationship with their citizens is much different from what I perceive ours is,” he said. “We have an ability to interact and communicate with citizens on a much more personal and intimate level.”

Though the department has taken to handling more situations by phone if possible amid the public health crisis, Shepherd has maintained his open-door policy and tries to keep the department engaged with the community.

“Our tack has always

been, if a citizen of Cottage Grove asks for a police officer, they’re going to get one,” he said, adding that citizens of larger cities cannot always expect such service.

Predictably, Cottage Grove’s size also sets it apart from larger cities in numbers of police-involved incidents.

In Shepherd’s 25 years with the department, he said there have been no confirmed reports of excessive force and only one case where weapons were discharged in the line of duty.

The case in question took place Sept. 20, 2014, when a male individual in need of counseling left his group home armed with a knife.

With three officers on scene, the man was reported to be non-compliant and charged at the officers. Two officers stopped the subject by firing rounds into the man’s leg or foot, after which he was treated, charged and released back to the group home.

No officers were hurt and the subject reportedly recovered.

Though Shepherd himself said he has “taken [his gun] out more times than I can count,” he attributes the police department’s lack of incidents to the its adherence to policy.

“I think that is generally the theme of how we do business,” he said.

Policy at Work

Demands for policy shifts have had a lot of currency in the national debate on law enforcement reform. Proposed

solutions have included calls for demilitarization, requiring body cameras, improved training and establishing community oversight committees.

Though rewriting policy to achieve meaningful change may seem a daunting task for some departments, Cottage Grove seems to have been ahead of the curve.

For the past 14 years, the CGPD has been using a policy manual designed and drafted by Lexipol, a private company which provides policy manuals, training bulletins and consulting services to law enforcement agencies, fire departments and other public safety departments.

This has included the department’s use of force policy, a document which finds overlap with many of the requests coming from campaigns seeking to address police violence.

One campaign in particular has achieved a fair amount of popularity.

Prompted by the protests against police

requiring a warning before shooting, duty to intervene, banning shooting at moving vehicles, requiring comprehensive reporting, requiring

cues at each other,” he said, adding that a requirement to exhaust all alternatives before shooting is unrealistic considering the nature of unpredictable circumstances.

“It’s assuming that situations are static,” he said.

Still, de-escalation is baked into officer interactions and is required training, both in academy and in achieving certification.

“So it’s already part of being an officer,” said Shepherd. “We don’t go in to ramp things up, we go in to calm things down.”

In addition to developing the department’s manual, Lexipol offers the CGPD daily training bulletins — 15-minute exercises quizzing officers on policies as procedures, which is considered part of yearly training hours and helps officers stay keen on following good instincts.

“We hire people and give them guns because we trust them to make decisions in a logical manner, not necessarily a step-by-step manner,” Shepherd said.

Cottage Grove’s low incident rate may be due in part to the effective use of these policies and training. Shepherd recounted several cases which could have

See **POLICY 10A**

“I’m interested in getting at the truth because I want officers to conduct themselves as professionals.”

—CGPD Captain Conrad Gagner

shootings of civilians in Missouri, New York, Baltimore and elsewhere, an activist movement called Campaign Zero emerged in 2015 with proposals to end the deaths and excessive force resulting from police encounters.

The campaign’s solutions focus on limiting police interventions, improving community interactions and ensuring accountability.

The hashtag for the campaign, #8CantWait, began trending on social media after the killing of George Floyd in May and, though the project has received widespread endorsement, others have criticized it for lacking evidence or not addressing root problems in law enforcement.

The project proposes eight policy changes police departments could make to curtail police violence: banning chokeholds and strangleholds,

de-escalation, requiring, a use of force continuum and requiring exhausting all alternatives before shooting.

The first six of these policies are either included under the CGPD’s use-of-force policy or part of mandatory officer training. The last two, however, are not specifically addressed.

This is partially, Shepherd said, because they are not always feasible.

While a use-of-force continuum used to be part of policy, “It’s morphed into force examples,” he said, explaining that these days officer reactions depend more on threat levels.

Shepherd worries that a codified continuum can get officers stuck on the steps rather than reacting and adapting to each circumstance.

“A verbal argument between a guy and his wife is different from two guys swinging pool

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