



**Police Service Animals  
Joint BPD – OMB Policy Project 2011  
Staff Responses to Identified Issues  
Prepared by Captain Pete Ritter  
November 17, 2011**



**Executive Summary**

During FY 2011, representatives of the Boise Police Department and Office of Community Ombudsman collaborated to review current operations of the BPD Canine Unit. The goal of the review was to analyze unit operations and make recommendations for efficiency improvements. The study came at an opportune time as management of the Canine Unit had recently been returned to the Patrol Division from the Administrative Support Bureau where it had resided for approximately two years. The Canine Unit is a valuable tool for the department and requires proper management to avoid liability. This report will serve as a foundation for moving forward in effectively managing this valuable resource. The purpose of this paper is to outline initial steps to bring the unit into compliance with the report’s recommendations. The Chief of Police and the Community Ombudsman will monitor the progress the improvements over the next six months and provide an updated report to the Mayor by July 1, 2012.

**History of the BPD Canine Unit**

BPD implemented a patrol canine unit in 1995 with the first canine/handler teams going into service in early 1996. Today, the Canine Unit is comprised of canine/handler teams and three sergeants. A lieutenant is assigned as the program coordinator. The teams are assigned to each of the day, swing and night shift teams as members of that Patrol or Airport team. The canines used by the Boise Police Department are trained extensively in handler protection, suspect apprehension, drug and article detection and at the airport, explosives detection.



**Recommendations and Responses**

**1. Organization and Supervision**

Issue: Police service dogs are valuable, sometimes life-saving tools for officers. The dogs often assist officers in the safe apprehension of dangerous suspects, locate drugs for seizure and allow for successful criminal prosecutions. Inherent in having a canine program, especially dual-purpose drug detection/suspect apprehension patrol dogs are certain risks and potential liability for the city and the handler/officer. The current supervisory structure tasks three sergeants to handle canine training and administrative duties. These responsibilities are

in addition to the sergeants other full-time supervisory tasks. It is the nature of ancillary assignments to sometimes create time conflicts and struggles balancing priorities. Our review found this multi-sergeant supervisory structure may not be the most efficient to fully maximize the benefits of the canine program while as much as possible, mitigating the risks.

Recommendation: The review committee recommends a full-time supervisor, one sergeant, be assigned to manage the canine program. Each canine team would continue to report to his/her shift supervisor while the canine sergeant would be responsible for canine operations, including training, budget preparation and tracking, equipment, activity and outcome documentation, and liaison with the BPD Canine Foundation and with CID regarding drug seizure money.

Response: Current budgets do not allow the department the ability to create a new supervisor position dedicated solely to the Canine Unit. Until such an opportunity exists, an alternative response is being implemented. Captain Ritter, with the assistance of canine unit members and supervisors, compiled a list of duties, responsibilities and expectations. It is hoped that this further identification of duties will delineate responsibilities sufficiently to allow efficient operation of the unit until a full time supervisor is financially feasible. (Addendum A)

## **2. Funding**

Issue: The complete cost of operating the Canine Unit is mixed into several department budget lines, meaning costs are not specifically tracked and managed as canine unit expenses. In addition, there is no tracking the dollar amount seized as a result of the dogs activities, whether dual-purpose or single-purpose drug detection dogs, and thus no process to use seizure funds to re-invest in the canine program.

### Recommendations:

- a. Creation of a separate budget to cover all costs related to the Canine Unit, including officer salaries and benefits, call-out and canine-related overtime, training, certification and re-certification, acquisition and training of new dogs on a planned replacement model, maintenance costs of dogs (food, vets, board when needed), equipment, supplies, etc.
- b. Establish a set percentage or dollar amount available annually from the Asset Seizure Fund to be used on qualified expenses with a transparent process for requesting and gaining approval for use of seizure funds earmarked for the canine program.
- c. Encourage increased fund raising for the BPD Canine Foundation.

### Response:

- a. The current budgeting practice within the city does not allow for PCNs to be placed in the Canine Unit budget as the officers involved are permanently assigned to the Patrol Division. Canine responsibilities are an ancillary assignment within patrol just like officer assignment to the Special Operations Unit, the Explosive Ordinance Detection Unit and the Emergency Services Unit. As such, with the exception of salary base personnel costs, the canine unit already functions under a separate budget and no change can be made without a change system wide.

b. The BPD BANDIT Narcotics Unit currently manages and disperses all drug seizure funds. It should be noted BANDIT has traditionally provided funds for a variety of canine related expenses but there are competing interests for these funds. Dedicating a percentage or dollar amount of drug seizures attained through canine activity to be returned to the Canine Unit will be done through coordination with BANDIT supervisors.

c) Fundraising was discussed during a recent meeting with members of the Canine Unit and a variety of ideas were suggested. Since the officers involved in the unit are the direct beneficiaries of fundraising, it was decided they should take the lead in manning and managing these ideas under the direction of unit supervisors. Assignments have been made and initial plans are being formulated for some of the ideas including a fun run, corporate sponsorship, and sale of BPD Canine t-shirts and other mementos. If managed correctly the Foundation should be self sustaining.



### 3. Data Collection

Issue: The dual-purpose patrol and single-purpose drug detection canine operations do not have a usable system for collecting consistent, reliable data about training, deployment and results. The Airport explosives detection operation does collect the information as required by the federal grants they receive.

Recommendation: Identify and implement a process to collect reliable data that allows for consistent reporting of the information to handlers, supervisors, department command staff and the public.

Response: Three issues have been identified in this area. First, training and deployment is tracked by handlers and supervisors using a variety of hard-copy forms. Members of the unit are currently developing a single form for use by all unit members in documenting these areas. The tracking sheet should be ready for use by mid-December, 2011.

Second, the Canine Unit trains weekly, however the training has not consistently been reported for tracking to the BPD Training section. This has been addressed in the outline for responsibilities in Addendum A.

Canine Unit members are currently involved in the development of an Excel based program able to retrieve information Canine Unit handlers enter off of their new tracking sheets. The Excel program will replace a web based software program purchased several years ago that has proven inefficient with tied into other current city operating systems. The new Excel data collection program is expected to be in place by January, 2012.

#### 4. Dual-purpose Patrol Dogs: “Find and Bite” or “Bark and Hold”?

Issue: Several police canine programs around the country are transitioning from apprehension dogs trained to bite a subject upon detection (“find and bite”) to dogs trained to alert on a subject and bite if the subject becomes aggressive and/or attempts to flee (“bark and hold”). In addition, model policies and best practices from organizations such as the International Chief of Police, the Police Executive Research Foundation, and the United States Department of Justice are recommending that police departments adopt the “bark and hold” methodology. It is recognized, however, that each method has its own risks and benefits.

Recommendation: Any recommendation in this area should be deferred until reliable BPD data is available.

Response: As a reliable department data becomes available, this item may be revisited for a future response.

#### Conclusion

On-going review is essential to maintaining and potentially improving the quality of the Boise Police Canine Unit. This joint report has provided review and direction valuable in moving the BPD Canine Unit toward a successful future while protecting the interests of both the city and the citizens we served. It will serve as a springboard for maximizing efficiency in both line level operation and in management of this important resource.



#### Addendum A

Shift supervisors will be responsible for scheduling leave, department quarterly training, quarterly shoots and other non-canine related training as requested.

Canine Unit supervisors will be responsible to coordinate all canine related training with shift chain of command.

#### Responsibilities in the Canine Unit will be divided as follows:

**1) Handlers** are responsible for care and training of their assigned canine. They are responsible for completing deployment sheets and training reports and turning those in to their supervisors weekly. They should report any canine issues as soon as practical to their supervisors. They are expected to attend and participate fully in all unit training unless previously excused by their supervisor. They may assist in locating training sites and in the development of planning training scenarios the training officer, supervisors and unit manager. They are required to perform regular patrol duties as needed and to coordinate with shift chain

of command to make sure shift supervisors are aware of and appropriately schedule canine training into the patrol team calendar.

**2) Training Officer:** Officer Randy Arthur is the lead training officer for all drug and dual purpose dogs. Officer Arthur is responsible for developing the curriculum for all training, having an outline prepared and for reporting that training has been successfully completed. Other unit members and unit supervisors shall assist him in these responsibilities as needed. He will report the completed training to the department training unit and to POST as required. This will include a roster of attendees, any issues identified with individual teams and remedial or corrective training as prescribed and completed. It is expected that the Training Officer will utilize on-duty time to plan for and coordinate training.

**3) Canine Unit Supervisors:** Canine Unit supervisors are responsible for making sure that canine training occurs and is reported as required in items 1 and 2. Supervisors are required to attend all weekly training unless excused by the unit manager. In the event they can not attend they shall be replaced by either another unit supervisor or the unit manager. They are responsible for acting as safety officers at all training sessions. They are responsible for all logistical issues associated with weekly training including but not limited to decoy schedules, training locations, training aides and overall scene and scenario safety. They can be assisted in these duties by unit members. They will work closely with the Unit Training Officer to assure that training is relevant, organized and unit members are in attendance as required. They are responsible to assure that weekly deployment and training are entered into the department approved training data collection software and that the software program is capable of retrieving this information. They are responsible for scheduling canine demonstrations and should do so in a manner that minimizes overtime costs.

**4) Unit Manager:** The Unit Manager is responsible to maintain the unit budget and has authority to spend budget moneys as needed. He/she shall consult the Patrol Division Captain for large amount expenditures or operational decisions which may impact the operating philosophy of the unit. The Unit Manager has oversight responsibilities over the BPD Canine Foundation and shall monitor this area closely to assure that funds are being used in an appropriate manner and that appropriate fund raising activities are occurring on a regular basis. The manager is responsible for the overall efficiency of the unit at both the handler and administrative level. The Unit Manager will attend weekly trainings as needed. The manager shall meet regularly as needed to brief the Patrol Division Commander on all issues relating to the unit. The Unit Manager has oversight over the development and implementation of unit policy and standard operating procedure. He/she may be assisted in these duties by Canine Unit supervisors, training officers and handlers. The manager is responsible for replacement planning for equipment, personnel and canines.