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ASHEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Asheville is a great city, one of the top tourist destinations in the nation. It is frequently ranked by illustrious magazines as home of excellent craft beer, unique culture, and delicious local restaurants. The citizens of Asheville make this a target destination by travelers from across the globe and one of the most sought after places to live on the east coast. The citizens of Asheville thrive as unique and atypical and enjoy the recognition of doing things "the Asheville Way." Safewise.com lists Asheville as the 47th safest city in NC, but with a highly experienced and fully staffed police department the city has the potential to be near the top of the list.

Recently there have been issues in the police department, prompting an in depth strategic plan and intentional restructuring. These changes will no doubt be for the best, but there are some possible avenues of action that should be seriously considered. The implementation of which will lead to increased morale, reduced employee turnover, lower the cost of training new recruits, and reduce liability through a more experienced and professional police department.

A story released by WLOS showed that the department lost 13 officers in 2011, 12 officers in 2012, and 17 officers three-quarters of the way through 2013. The story also revealed that APD has a 10% vacancy of sworn officers which is high when compared to similar sized Greenville, SC who had a 2% vacancy rate at the time of the story. There have been more officers leave since that story was released. The men and woman of the Asheville Police Department believe that employee retention is an issue that needs to be addressed. Of approximately 40 officers working on night shift, three fourths of the officers have been here less than two years.

In reviewing the strategic plan for the department, there is a compensation study in the works that seeks to determine if the pay for officers is on par for the work performed. The "Asheville Way" is one of unorthodox professionalism and unique best practice. The City of Asheville seeks to manage its affairs in a manner that is efficient and generous, professional and caring, as well as unique and excellent. The actions suggested in this document intend to be in line with these values and seek to enhance the city's reputation in this regard.

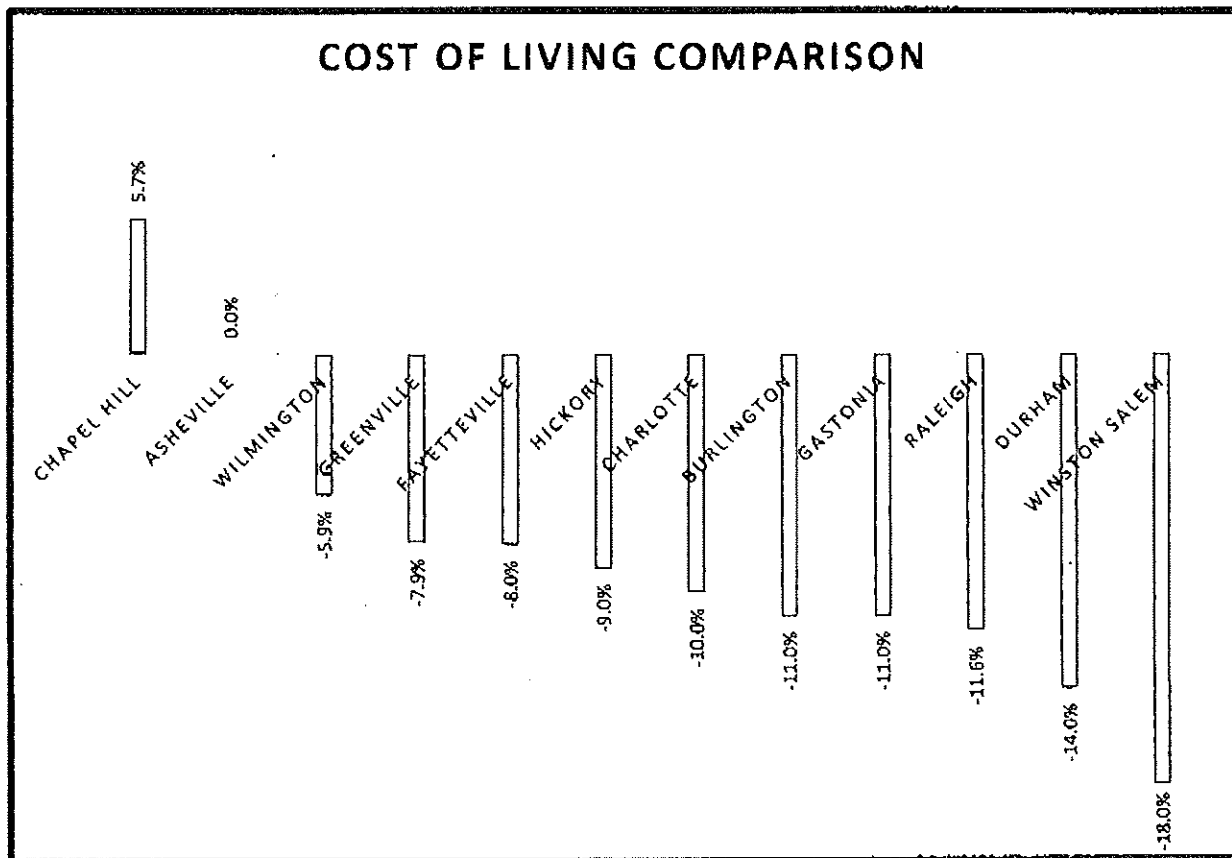
In conducting a study utilizing information available online there are several factors that should be included for consideration when determining compensation levels of police officers. The cost of living, entry level salary, and a step payment plan should all be examined. An in-depth review of these factors and subsequent policy changes may positively address issues that are negatively affecting the police department and the people of Asheville, namely high rates of employee turnover, a high vacancy rate, and a low number of officers who live within the city limits.

The purpose of this document is to spread information in a reasonable and logical manner in regards to the status of the organizational well-being of the Asheville Police Department. This document will review the cost of living in Asheville as it relates to other major cities in North Carolina, as well as the rates of compensation and incentives given to Asheville Police Officers compared to other major police departments in North Carolina. Please take the time to review the following data and come to your own conclusions.

COST OF LIVING

When attempting to address the issue of retention there are several things to consider, including the base salary, cost of living, step plan, as well as other incentives. Because Asheville is such an attractive destination to move to, the cost of living is higher than many cities across the state. A cost of living comparison shows that with the exception of Chapel Hill, Asheville costs more to live in than other major cities in North Carolina, thus the salary paid has less spending power. The chart below (Table 1) shows the cost of living from other major cities based on information from www.cnn.money.com and www.bankrate.com.

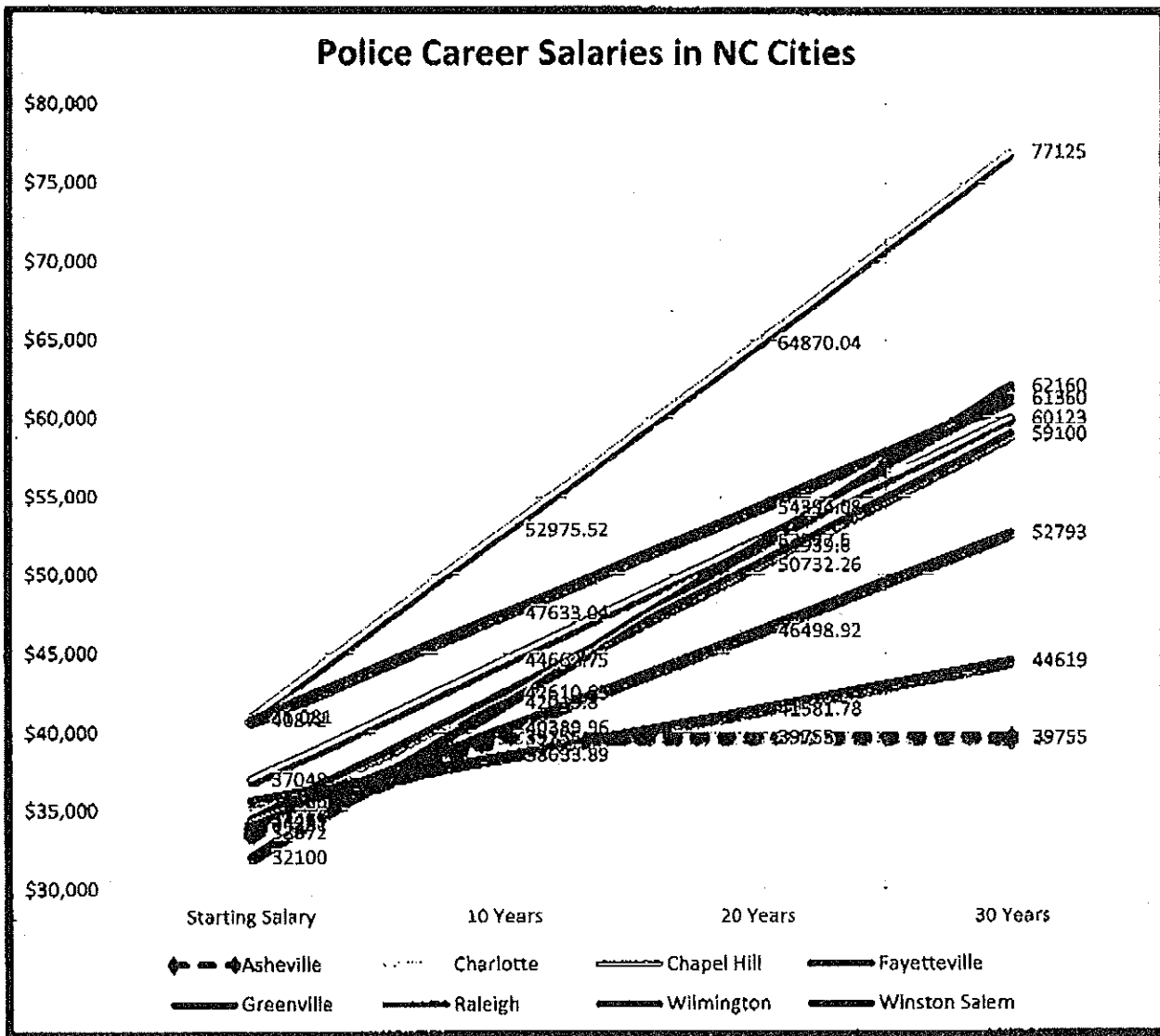
Table 1



ENTRY LEVEL SALARY AND SALARY INCREASES OVER CAREER

The starting salary at the Asheville Police Department is \$33,672 which increases to \$39,755 after 3 years of employment. This entry level and 3 years of experience pay is second lowest (to Winston Salem) but not significantly out of line with other cities starting pay. When the lower starting pay is considered along with the higher cost of living, Winston Salem's starting salary would be adjusted to \$37,878 (+18%) for the adjusted cost of living in Asheville.

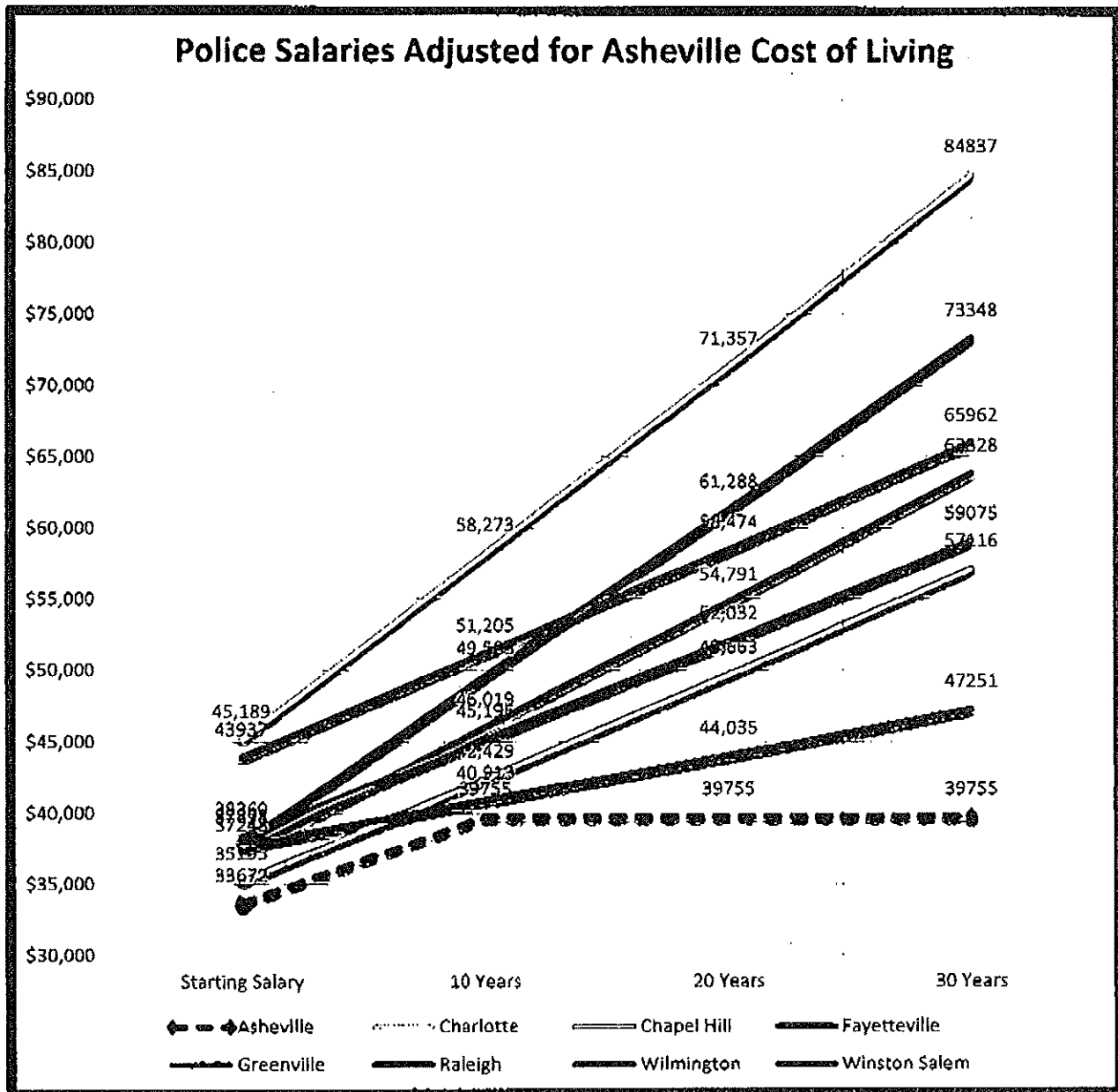
With a higher cost of living in Asheville and no instituted step pay plan, Asheville lags far behind in salaries for law enforcement. Below (Table 2) is the actual starting and maximum salaries for patrol officers in several major cities across North Carolina. Asheville starts second from the bottom (lower when adjusted for cost of living) and then falls farther behind because there is no step plan in use and the salary stagnates after 3 years.



POLICE SALARIES ADJUSTED FOR HIGH COST OF LIVING

When those same salaries are adjusted for the cost of living in Asheville there is increased disparity between pay in other cities compared to Asheville. The chart below (Table 3) adjusts salary based on the cost of living in Asheville. As you can see, no other police officer working for a major city in North Carolina earns less spending power than an Asheville Police Officer.

Table 3



*The salary information was obtained from the respective city websites

INCENTIVES TO WORK FOR THE ASHEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

The retention issue at the Asheville Police Department stems not only from the low salaries offered, but also the lack of incentives. The above charts show that the pay is low but reasonable at the beginning of a career, but without a step plan, longevity pay, educational incentives, or take home vehicles, there are few reasons to stay beyond 3 years. At 3 years, unless seeking a promotion, pay is already maxed out. There are many who move up in the organization and achieve higher base salaries, but the department cannot be comprised of all sergeants and above, there is still a need for the majority of the department to be patrol officers. With current turnover, there is a constant revolving door of officers who leave for other departments that offer these financial benefits. The table below shows four categories of benefits that are consistent across the state. **Cities vary in which and how many of these to implement, but as you can see from the chart, each city, with the exception of Asheville, implements at least two of these incentives with one of them being a step plan.**

Table 4

	Education Incentive	Take Home Car	Step Plan	Longevity Pay
Asheville				
Burlington		X	X	X
Charlotte	X		X	
Chapel Hill	X		X	X
Durham	X		X	
Fayetteville	X		X	
Gastonia	X	X	X	
Greenville			X	X
Raleigh			X	X
Wilmington	X	X	X	
Winston Salem	X	X	X	

The citizens of Asheville deserve the best quality service from their police department and in return, the police officers should receive fair pay for their service. In an effort to give the citizens of Asheville the best service, keeping officers at the department for more than three years is important. Asheville has been training excellent officers who leave for other departments after they get several years of experience. The training of officers and processing employee turnover is expensive. Cost of employee turnover includes some of the following.

COSTS OF EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

Separation Costs

- * Cost of a supervisor's salary and benefits to conduct all of the exit interviews
- * Cost of the salary and benefits of the person who is leaving to participate in exit interview
- * Administrative costs for processing the resignation including payroll, benefits, and deductions
- * Administrative costs for changing computer security codes, key cards
- * Salary of staff and officer to return and inspect equipment
- * Selection costs invested in the departing officer
- * Training costs invested in the departing officer

Recruitment Costs

- * Annual advertising and recruitment costs divided by the number of new hires (include cost of travel, lodging, and salary for recruiters, brochures, and so on)
- * Salary/benefits of recruiters divided by the number of new hires
- * Expenses of recruiters divided by the number of new hires

Selection Costs

- * Total cost of selection tests divided by the number of new officers hired
- * Cost of the review board member's salaries and benefits divided by the number of officers hired
- * Cost of an investigator's salary and expenses for background investigations divided by the number of new officers hired
- * Cost of the officer's salary and benefits administering the physical agility exam
- * Cost of executive interview panel's salary divided by the number of officers hired
- * Cost of the applicant's medical and drug screening
- * Cost of the psychological screening exams

New Employee Costs

- * Salary, benefits, and expenditures to complete employment paperwork
- * Salary and benefits for payroll personnel to set up the new employee
- * Department's expenditures for setting up computer access, DCI and other networks
- * Cost of new uniforms and equipment
- * Salary and benefits for staff to issue equipment.

Training Costs

- * Cost of orientation and field training material
- * Supervisory salary and benefits for making and reviewing assignments during field training
- * Recruit's salary and benefits during academy training
- * One-half of the field training officer's salary and benefits during the recruit's field training
- * Recruit's salary and benefits during field training
- * Supervisor's cost to set up attendance in training
- * Salary and benefits of recruit for all in-service training beyond field and basic training
- * Salary and benefits of recruit for advanced training classes
- * Expenditures for travel and meals for advanced training classes
- * Salary of new officer to attend in-service training

Other "Soft" Costs

- * Overtime to cover vacancies
- * Loss of productivity before employee departs
- * Loss of knowledge and experience
- * Supervisor disruption (time spent correcting increased mistakes)
- * Peer disruption (lower productivity from increased workload, lower morale)

Table 5: Calculated Cost for Police Employee Turnover for Cordele, GA

Separation Costs	\$28,647
Recruitment	\$1,250
Selection	\$4,246
New Employee	\$1,592
Training	\$23,165
Total Cost	\$58,900

*The table is for Cordele, GA and does not reflect specific costs for APD, but shows the significant costs associated with high turnover.

It seems clear that salary deficiencies and a lack of incentives are a major cause of employee turnover. A significant number of Asheville Police Officers are leaving their positions here and going to other agencies that offer better pay and incentives. **The people of Asheville are, for all intents and purposes, operating a training ground for other police departments.** This high rate of turnover is costing the city a significant amount of money and increases the liability of the city by having a largely inexperienced police force. By implementing a pay plan and other financial incentives the city would improve the morale and experience of the police department and improve the level of service to the citizens of Asheville.

One might argue that the manning levels are not low because APD is currently short less than 10 officers, according to the figures provided to the media by the City of Asheville. APD had 12 officers graduate the police academy and finish field training this summer as well as hired approximately 24 new officers consisting of cadets, lateral transfers, and BLET certified officers. In spite of these 36, there still exists a personnel vacancy. These numbers do not reflect the current number of "boots on the ground" and include a substantial number of cadets who still need BLET training, along with brand new employees who have just obtained BLET certificates. A cadet starting the police academy is at least 9 or 10 months away from being able to operate independently without constant supervision. A new rookie officer cannot compare with the depth of organizational knowledge and professionalism that a 5 or 10 year veteran possesses.

We humbly request that you consider the facts presented above and come to your own conclusions. The Asheville Police Department was once regarded as a great agency, and attracted employees from all over the state and the country. The Asheville Police Department can regain that status again, but only if City leaders have the conscious determination to make it so.