



Recruiting and Retaining the Best

by Robert Gerrish for Sheriff

How do you get somebody to work for you and then how do you get them to stay?

I said it before: I'd like the Sheriff's Department to be seen as a peer competitor for applicants with other municipal law enforcement agencies. To get there we need to simultaneously reduce barriers to application and make the compensation package more attractive in comparison to what other agencies are offering.

Barriers to application can be reduced via at least two methods. I attended a job fest in Lyndon back in May and was disappointed to see only one law enforcement agency (Corrections) present to speak to the hundreds of eager job seekers. If elected, I'd make time to get out and make the case in person to potential applicants as to why they should consider making a career of serving the people of this county (at a minimum such forums are another way to connect with constituents and listen to their concerns). The process of application should also be easier. A quick perusal of the [sheriffs' department website](#) notes that they are currently looking for part time deputies for various roles. There is no online application function visible. In the digital age when even retail and other entry level positions allow you to apply online, we should bring applicants in the pipeline with a similar tool. Law enforcement has very stringent hiring standards (and rightfully so) and we need to encourage applicants to enter the process as much as possible. At a minimum, I would have a blank application available for download with an email contact to direct questions to. For applicants looking for employment via the [Vermont police academy website](#) the department employment advertisement still lists the prior sheriff's name, suggesting the advertisement has not been updated in at least a year and a half. [Documents validating the above information may be accessed here](#). If we are to be competitive, applicants need current information as to the agency, roles/responsibilities and compensation.

Once the applicant is successful at meeting all requirements and is found to be a good fit, we want to keep them. Law enforcement is a very in demand and competitive field. One of the ways we do this is by offering (at a minimum) comparable benefits or salary to similar agencies. In Vermont, we have a state and municipal retirement systems. A 2022 study by the state treasurer found that 12 (of 14 total) departments were enrolled in one of these retirement systems.

The Caledonia County Sheriff's Department is one of the two that does not offer a pension plan (except for state government paid employees). I would argue that leadership means taking care of employees. This includes ensuring employees have a competitive pension available to them so after a long career they can enjoy a secure retirement. In addition, this benefit allows the department to stay competitive for high quality applicants, whether new to

law enforcement or an experienced officer considering a lateral move. If a benefit is offered at the vast majority of other places, why not at CCSD?

In conclusion, employee recruitment and retention needs to be done intentionally with a goal of competitively attracting and rewarding those who choose to serve our county. We should make it easy to apply so we can consider if applicants meet our high standards and we should offer comparable benefits to reward those who work for us. A strong sheriff's department requires talent to be successful and we should attract and retain that talent.

Please note, I know that there are other (often intangible) reasons why employees would find a particular department a desirable place to work. For length and clarity they are not included here but I will discuss that topic in the near future.

I'm always interested in speaking with Caledonia County residents about their Law Enforcement concerns. Want to ask a question? [Contact me](#)! Thank you.