



**NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT
Memorandum**

November 14, 2014

TO: Chief Tiernan
FROM: Lt. Bill Hargrove
SUBJECT: Long Gun Replacement Proposal

The men and women of Delaware law enforcement have utilized a small variety of weapon systems over the past 50 years with the handgun as the most visible and recognized by the public. What most do not understand is that the handgun is primarily designed to be a defensive weapon that is readily available to protect the officer or another from sudden unforeseen attacks. The features that make handguns practical defensive weapons also limit their effectiveness when confronting suspects who are heavily armed and/or at greater distances. For these situations officers have relied on "long guns" as the weapon of choice.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, officers relied on the 12 gauge shotgun as the standard long gun for all law enforcement issues. This system was chosen due to its versatility and firepower. Delaware was still mostly agricultural and most grew up hunting with shotguns. Officers were mainly male and appointed after serving in the military so very familiar with this type of weapon. In the 1990s Delaware law enforcement, including Newark (NPD), began a shift in hiring that required new officers have college education. Delaware became more developed and new recruits were still living at home when appointed. Most new recruits came to the police academy having never fired a firearm in their life.

The shotgun is a weapon that is heavy and can be uncomfortable to shoot when not done properly. Newark offered the weapons on a shared basis and could be voluntarily signed in and out by on duty officers. The majority of the time the weapons were never taken out and remained at the police station. NPD was also restricted by its own policies to the 00 buck shot round. This round fired nine 32 caliber projectiles with a maximum range of 25 yards. Other types of rounds were restricted due to over penetration dangers.

In the mid-1990s the firearms training staff at NPD recognized that the 12 gauge shotgun was no longer practical for most officers. NPD had developed a SWAT team during this same time and had purchased Heckler and Koch MP5's for the six officers assigned. The MP5 is a 9mm shoulder fired weapon that, while a handgun caliber, offers greater velocity and firepower due to its extended barrel length. This additional velocity allowed

a 50 yard maximum effective range and a much greater accuracy percentage than the shotgun. Weapon mounted lights and slings made it a very efficient weapon system designed for the environment that it was going to be used in. Through the development of the SWAT team all officers were exposed to the MP5 system for familiarization. The firearms instructors immediately saw that most officers were very comfortable with the weapon and able to hit the targets with little instruction. A recommendation was made and approved to seek funding to replace all the shotguns with MP5's for department wide use. Between 1995 and 1999 the department purchased 16 MP5's of which 6 were issued to the SWAT team and the remaining 10 were available to the rest of the department to share for patrol duties. The total package for each gun was approximately \$1,500.00 and was funded with a combination of city and grant money. Over the following 10 years the MP5 proved to be a highly effective weapon that served the needs of the department. Also during that time many events forced law enforcement to look beyond the shotgun and MP5 as a practical long gun option.

The Columbine High School shooting in 1999 and the terrorist attacks of 09/11/2001 changed the focus of both law enforcement and gun manufacturers across the country. Police departments across the country realized that their responsibilities extended far beyond the occasional burglary or armed robbery. We were being told on a daily basis that we are the front line of terrorism and that we need to be prepared. The term "active shooter" was coined and we were told that we need to be prepared for a lone officer to enter a school with 75 yard hallways and accurately stop innocent children from being killed. The landscape in the City of Newark was changing on a daily basis and we saw that our weapons would be ineffective in many locations due to the size of the buildings and parking lots surrounding them. The demand for handgun caliber shoulder fired weapons all but vanished and manufacturers all focused on making AR-15 type weapons chambered in .223 and 308 calibers. This tripled the price of the MP5 and eliminated it being available in the caliber being used in our current handguns.

There are many advantages and one disadvantage of converting to the AR-15 weapon system chambered in .223. The disadvantage is that the sighting system on these guns is less forgiving than the shotgun and MP5. Because the sights are adjustable we will not be able to share these weapons among many officers. Each officer will need to be issued their own rifle. This has been a common practice of the majority of police agencies in New Castle County including NCCPD, DSP, UDPD, Capital Police, and Middletown Police for several years. The Delaware State Police Firearms Training Unit is now focused on AR-15 patrol rifle training for all recruits during the academy. Due to the AR-15 being built on the military version (M16 platform) all parts regardless of manufacturer are made to military specifications. This eliminates the need to stock all but the simplest of parts because anything can be ordered and delivered within a day. The only part that is not replaceable is the lower receiver which contains the serial number of the weapon. With a proper maintenance schedule and inspection the service life of the weapon is extended indefinitely.