



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Stevens & Board of Commissioners  
FROM: Eric Peterson, Town Manager *EJP*  
DATE: June 10, 2010  
SUBJECT: Withdrawal from CALEA Program and Decision to Surrender Status as an Accredited Law Enforcement Agency

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As the Town Board knows, the Hillsborough Police Department became an accredited agency through CALEA in 2004 and was reaccredited in 2007. This was a major honor and recognition as few law enforcement agencies pursue and earn accreditation through the voluntary program. CALEA — the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies — is a nonprofit credentialing organization. It provides law enforcement agencies the opportunity to voluntarily demonstrate that they meet an established set of professional standards. Hillsborough is one of approximately 28 municipal police departments in North Carolina accredited by CALEA.

The instances of backdating documents associated with the CALEA reaccreditation process that were publicly reported in April had previously been reported to CALEA by the town manager. CALEA Deputy Director Craig Hartley indicated the Commission likely would need to investigate the backdating issue as it was a serious matter and could threaten the HPD's accredited status. The town manager and Acting Police Chief Davis Trimmer sent CALEA copies of all backdated documents found as part of the town manager's investigation, and a summary of the subsequent review of all CALEA documents ordered by the acting chief. CALEA reviewed the backdated documents and learned more about the exceptionally poor shape of the HPD's files — most of the more than 400 files do not have sufficient documentation of compliance. CALEA's deputy director stated the HPD likely would not be given a second extension to pursue reaccreditation and there was a possibility the commission would strip the department of its accredited status. Hartley suggested the HPD may want to consider voluntarily withdrawing from CALEA and surrendering its status as an accredited agency.

When the department earned accreditation and reaccreditation in prior years, the town made a point to publicly announce these successes. **While it's unpleasant to do so, now that a major failure has occurred, there is an obligation to publicly report the circumstances regarding the decision to surrender the Hillsborough Police Department's status as an accredited agency.** While the loss of certification is voluntary, it was also done under duress and the department, quite frankly, would not have been able to earn reaccreditation during the August on-site inspection.

On June 1, the town manager and acting police chief sent CALEA's deputy director a letter notifying the commission that Hillsborough has withdrawn from the accreditation program. The primary reason for participating in the CALEA accreditation process is to give the citizens, town management, and elected officials a high level of confidence that their police department meets or exceeds recognized law enforcement standards. Hence, maintaining accredited status had been a top priority of the Town Board since the effort to pursue accreditation first began almost a decade ago. An accreditation manager

position was even created and funded starting in July 2004. This represents a large commitment of money and time.

In 2007, the department barely passed the re-accreditation inspection. The department scored the minimal number of points required to maintain its accredited status. In addition, the department was accredited with conditions that required a follow-up inspection in 2008 to ensure a variety of issues were addressed. Police management at the time stated they were unprepared for the 2007 inspection for a variety of reasons and pledged to never put themselves in that situation again. Yet the condition of the files appears to be even worse three years later in spite of the lessons learned from the 2007 near failure. When questioned by the town manager in 2009 about problems with the reaccreditation process, a police department representative repeatedly provided reassurance that while recent delays had occurred — due to postponing the mock assessments multiple times and delaying the official on-site inspection in April — the reaccreditation process was fine. As is evidenced by the failed mock assessment in October 2007, multiple delays in mocks, delaying of the official on-site inspection, extensive occurrences of backdating, and CALEA's suggestion that HPD surrender its accredited status, things were not fine.

### **How did such a major failure occur?**

To help answer this question two documents have been prepared for Town Board and public review: 1) a timeline of events leading up to withdrawal from the CALEA accreditation program, and 2) a summary of findings of an investigation that took place in the Hillsborough Police Department. In brief, it appears the following were primary causes that contributed to the collapse of the HPD's ability to comply with CALEA standards:

1. Failure of police management to monitor/support the CALEA process and key personnel.
2. Failure of police management to inform town management of severe problems with the CALEA reaccreditation process.
3. Failure of key personnel to understand CALEA standards and the required documentation.
4. Failure to request proper documentation from HPD staff.
5. Failure of HPD personnel to turn in proofs/documentation in a timely manner.
6. Lack of common sense and failure of basic ethics. One key employee knew that backdating was wrong but did it anyway. Another claimed it was acceptable. Most HPD personnel were told that backdating was acceptable and that it was common; thus, these personnel were responding to orders and requests.
7. Poor organization.
8. Key staff spending excessive time conducting personal business via e-mail and Internet usage on social networking sites in violation of the town's Computer System, Email, and Internet Access Policy.
9. Key staff conducting excessive work/activities not associated with HPD work assignments and in violation of HPD and town policies.

### **What is the connection between the investigation and problems with CALEA?**

As the board is well aware, the majority of the town manager's time since October 2009 has been devoted to investigating issues within the Hillsborough Police Department. In late October, a variety of complaints, concerns, and grievances were brought to the town manager by HPD employees. The town manager quickly sought assistance from a third-party law firm (retained through the League of Municipalities) and investigator to work in tandem to investigate these issues. The investigator prepared an approximately 2,000-page report which the Town Manager received in late January 2010, for further investigation and action. A second round of interviews with employees in mid-late February turned up greater details and actual evidence of the problems associated with the CALEA process. A general summary of findings from the investigation is attached. The North Carolina General Statutes covering privacy of employee personnel records — NCGS 160A-168 — prevents the town from releasing more

information. The town is attempting to release as much information about this situation and investigation as is legally permitted.

**How pervasive were problems in the HPD?**

The investigation found that most of the problems uncovered were narrowly focused among a very small number of employees. Also, many of the concerns and allegations originally presented to the town manager turned out not to be true or were based on misinformation and misunderstandings. Appropriate disciplinary action was taken where warranted.

**Additional Information**

Please find attached the June 1<sup>st</sup> letter that was sent to CALEA as well as a copy of the press release that was sent out in mid-April. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you would like any additional information.

Cc: Davis Trimmer, Acting Chief of Police  
Hillsborough Police Department  
Bob Hornik, Town Attorney