



**MAYOR JOHN E. McCORMAC**  
**ADDRESSES STATE LAW-SENATE BILL #3220**  
**MINORITY RECRUITMENT & SELECTION**  
**WOODBIDGE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Last year, the State Legislature passed and Governor Murphy signed a new law (Senate No. 401) that requires all law enforcement agencies to establish a minority recruitment and selection program using guidelines to be established by the State Attorney General.

Approximately half of the municipalities in the State of New Jersey operate under Civil Service guidelines, including Woodbridge Township. For our Police Department, this means that we can only hire Police Officers from the official Civil Service list given to us by the State which is generated approximately every three years after the State Department of Personnel holds a test to rank applicants by score.

Persons who want to be Police Officers in Woodbridge must live in the Township at the time of applying to take the Civil Service test and must maintain residence through their official hiring date at which time they can move out of Woodbridge Township. The list we receive from the State includes only those applicants who indicated Woodbridge as one of their preferences for employment.

Veterans who served in a combat zone get what is referred to as "Veteran's preference" which ranks qualified candidates by score at the top of the list before civilians as long as they attain a score of at least 70 on the test.

As a result of Civil Service rules, Woodbridge therefore cannot directly "recruit" candidates to be Police Officers in the Township but we can recruit them to take the Police Officer Civil Service test and inform them of appropriate details regarding the test.

The Township's formal recruitment practices are detailed in Chapter 410 of our Police Department Policies and Procedures and they include appropriate Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity provisions. We visit schools and houses of worship and distribute informational flyers and make every effort to reach out to as many young people as possible with a particular focus on identifying minority candidates. The Commission for the Certification of Law Enforcement Agencies reviews all of our Policies and Procedures including Chapter 410 every three years and we have always achieved the top level of accreditation.

Earlier this year the State Legislature passed and the Governor signed an additional law (Senate No. 3220) that becomes effective August 4, 2021 which permits Civil Service Police Departments to directly hire Police Training Commission certified Police Officers who have not taken the Civil Service entry-level examination. This is commonly referred to as an "Alternate Route" plan.

Under this program, individuals can qualify for and attend a certified Police academy and graduate, usually after paying their own way through it. In addition they usually forego any income for approximately six months while in the Academy since they have no employer sponsoring them or promising them employment upon graduation.

The law also states that the Civil Service Commission shall establish rules and regulations and an administrative process to implement this law though that is still being contemplated and no such rules have been issued yet.

This new law allows the Township to begin the process of diversifying our Police force immediately rather than waiting for the next Civil Service test which may take years and which may not produce a list of candidates that will allow us to establish this diversity.

Woodbridge Township currently has 206 sworn Police Officers. We have a stated goal of getting to 215 during the current fiscal year 2021 and to 220 in fiscal year 2022. We currently have seven candidates in the Police Academy in Cape May, NJ and we are reviewing the current Civil Service listing in preparation of hiring more Police Officers.

Retirements always hamper our efforts to get our numbers up to exactly where we want them to be. We typically have 6-8 retirements per year so staying even in our count is difficult, let alone increasing it. To get 6-8 new Police Officers in any given year we have to evaluate and test approximately 50 candidates from the list. Many find other positions or change their mind about a law enforcement career. Many cannot establish Woodbridge residency and many do not qualify by passing a physical, psychological evaluation or drug test. Many are not able to graduate successfully from a Police Academy.

Of our 206 current Police Officers, 8.21% are female, 15.94% are Hispanic, 2.42% are Black and 3.38% are Asian. Our Township population according to the most recent census data is 50.27% female, 15.63% Hispanic, 9.85% Black and 22.42% Asian (with 8.55% classified as Other).

Clearly our Woodbridge Police force does not reflect the diversity of the Township. That needs to change.

To implement the new State law the Township Council must adopt a resolution or ordinance authorizing the Alternate Route plan. In adopting this law we will possess a valuable tool that will allow us to achieve the diversity we so desperately seek in the ranks of our Police Department. We can work with the rules and regulations that are promulgated by the Civil Service Commission and establish our own new Policies and Procedures that take advantage of this new option that was made available to us.

Our Township administration and our Police Department leadership are supportive of this resolution and we are anxious to begin its implementation.

During the last month of deliberations and discussions about the new law and the Alternate Route program there has been much misinformation in the public realm about the Township's plans. The following paragraphs address these inaccuracies.

This new law will not impact the Township's commitment to veterans throughout Woodbridge and it will not affect our hiring of veterans in any way. We made it crystal clear in discussions with Police representatives that we will not utilize the Alternate Route plan as long as there is an active Civil Service list with veterans on it. Veterans fought hard for our country and they fought hard for special consideration under Civil Service regulations and we will never take that away from them. Our commitment to our veterans is very important to us as elected and appointed officials.

We also stated that we would increase our goal of 220 Police Officers by one for every person we employed under the Alternate Route program. Some individual is always the next person who would have been hired if a municipality decided to employ one additional Police Officer and by counting Alternate Route hires on top of the 220 goal and not within it nobody will be "skipped" on the list because we implemented the program.

Concerns have been raised about how future Township governmental administrations and Police Department leadership might abuse this new law. First, there are strict anti-nepotism provisions in the law to prevent such activity. Second, we are willing to insert a "sunset" provision into the resolution making it effective through December 31, 2023, the last day of the current administration. Future leadership of the Township and the Department, which may or may not be different from current leadership, would therefore have to seek new approvals from the next Township Council to continue the Alternate Route program.

The Township has not had any communication with any individual about possible participation in the Alternate Route program. Not only is the State law not effective for five more months but the Township Council has yet to approve the resolution to allow us to implement the program.

Finally, the Township's lack of diversity on the Police Force is not the fault of any former or current Township or Police Department administrators. The lack of diversity is due to a flaw in the Civil Service system that is being properly addressed with the Alternate Route Program.

We as leaders of Woodbridge Township have always completely supported our Police Department 100% by increasing staffing levels and by providing all necessary training and equipment. We constantly refer to the Woodbridge Police Department as the best Police Department in the State of New Jersey and we mean it. Diversifying our Police Force can only make it better.

Any and all concerns about this new law will be addressed and additional questions will be answered as we move through a thorough and complete review of the resolution that we will ultimately present to the Township Council. However, distortions of facts and misrepresentations about our intentions will not be tolerated.

Thank you.

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