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## Cambridge Police Department

November 06, 2008 - Spotlights

Cambridge police commissioner Robert Haas always knew he wanted to be in law enforcement since he was a kid growing up in New Jersey. That decision was greatly influenced by his grandfather, who was one of New York City's finest police officers. His path led him to Rutgers University, where he received his masters degree in Criminal Justice Administration.

Haas started his police career as a patrol officer for the Morris Township (NJ) Police Department. Through his hard work and dedication to the force, Haas was promoted three times, from sergeant to lieutenant, and eventually administrative assistant to the chief, responsible for coordinating efforts to obtain national accreditation for his department. Although he had a promising and bright future in Morris Township, Haas knew he was behind a long line of career officers, all experienced and qualified, waiting for the next big promotion within the force. With an understanding of the system, Haas was highly motivated, and didn't want to just wait in line for the promotion. With the support of his loving wife, they packed up and moved to Westwood, Mass. where he became the chief of police.

During his tenure in Westwood, Haas made vast improvements in the department's capacity to serve the community. He took great pride in developing collaborative partnerships with local and regional community groups, schools, social service providers, and other law enforcement agencies to benefit the adolescents, juveniles, and seniors within his community.

Haas' leadership and 30 years of law enforcement experience was noticed by the former governor Mitt Romney administration. He was hired as the secretary of public safety for state, responsible for oversight of the Mass. State Police, the Department of Corrections, the National Guard, the Department of Fire Services and numerous other criminal justice and public safety agencies of the commonwealth. While serving, first as the Undersecretary for Law Enforcement and Homeland Security, and later as the secretary, he focused on improving the law enforcement response to homeland security matters and encouraging innovations in police responsiveness to community needs. He had the major leadership role in developing and implementing improved procedures and reporting requirements to ensure that police departments were not engaged in racial profiling through their enforcement activities.

On April 9, 2007, Haas was hired as police commissioner for the city of Cambridge. Not only was the city manager's office and city council impressed with his 30+ years of experience, but they felt he distinguished himself through his leadership, dedication, hard work, imagination and commitment to making law enforcement agencies more responsive to community needs and concerns. They view the police department is an integral part of the community. It is of great value and is seen as a tremendous resource, more than just responding to and solving crimes. People have problems and the police are seen as someone who can help. Haas' approach to law enforcement is from the perspective of customer service as well as crime prevention and apprehension, it was a perfect fit.

Haas was intrigued by the city's unique perspective when it comes to crime. They really focus on crime prevention rather than just answering and responding to call after call. Typically, urban police only have time to answer crime calls. While suburban areas are all about quality of life, in urban areas, the fear level is much higher. Cambridge, while being a densely populated urban area, has a strong suburban flavor. Although small in size (6.5 square miles), Cambridge is the 5th most densely populated urban city in the country (excluding business and universities). Add to that, Cambridge has a rich diversity in people, from different cultures and backgrounds, which in a lot of cases leads to conflict and crime. The challenges he faced were getting to understand the culture and the priorities of the city and its businesses and residents. Haas was also impressed by the city's vast resources, aimed at helping it's citizens including: churches, Salvation Army, CASPAR, human resources, police, health alliance, etc. Haas said, "The leaders of these organizations recognize that together they really have a chance to assist the residents with problems. The city council is also very supportive. I have ongoing dialogue with all 9 city counselors." Haas attends all the business association meetings, and is very proactive within the Cambridge community outside of work. He is also proud that his entire command staff takes an active role in the community as well.

On November 3rd the city celebrated the opening of the new police headquarters, a \$60 million, 100,000 s/f LEED certified building. It will be the first police station in the United States to hold such an accreditation from the U.S. Green Building Council.

What does the building mean to the City? Haas says, "The new facility will be a huge boost of moral for the officers and staff. The City has invested a lot in the police force. They believe that the \$60+ million dollars was worth every penny for what the force gives back to the community, and is a vital piece in making it stronger. The old technology of the past is scrapped to make way for new technology which will bolster performance and efficiency. The new technology enables officers to do what he refers to as "crime forecasting," the gathering and processing of data to predict and prevent crime. It is and art and a science to see the emerging patterns in crime." In an effort to continue the new "Green policies" the City has adopted, the force is adding 6 new Toyota Camry Highbrids in an effort to reduce their carbon footprint.

When Haas was asked, What Makes Cambridge Tick, he replied, "Cambridge has a very strong management team. They work collaboratively with each other on not just their own problems, but recognize that their problems are everyone's problems, they are all interrelated. Over the years, the City Manager has worked diligently at putting together a competent and caring staff. It's not by chance we are in this position, it's by hard work from the City Government, who has a set plan, and does a fantastic job following it."