



COUNTY OF ALBEMARLE POLICE DEPARTMENT



To: Trevor Henry, Kristy Shifflett, and Elizabeth-Latte Brother
From: Colonel Sean Reeves
Date: September 17, 2025
Subject: Albemarle County Employee Engagement Survey- Sworn and Civilian

Earlier this year, Albemarle County distributed an Employee Engagement Survey to all staff, including sworn and civilian members of the Police Department. I've since taken time to assess the feedback, which—while anonymous—contained some emotionally charged and unprofessional criticisms by a select few. However, there are some legitimate concerns which will be noted in the Survey Action Plan at the conclusion of the report.

Overall, participation rates from my department were relatively low: 52 sworn officers (31.9% of sworn personnel) and 8 civilians (28.6% of non-sworn personnel) responded. In my review, I will use both raw numbers and percentages to present the data accurately to avoid overstating/underrepresenting the scope of any one issue.

I began by reviewing the sworn staff responses, identifying that while the tone was more negative than positive, many of the most inflammatory comments likely originated from a small number of individuals. Approximately 5 officers who provided feedback included personal attacks, which I acknowledge but exclude from shaping policy or culture change. Also of note, several of the negative responses lacked context- making it difficult to identify a solution. For example, one respondent identified “a fear of retaliation”. However, there was no example provided of when an act of retaliation occurred within ACPD that would create this fear.

The remaining comments revealed consistent themes: concerns about leadership transparency and favoritism, low morale and mental health strain, communication gaps, frustration with promotion processes, and requests for more training and development. Compensation concerns were present but less dominant, appearing in roughly 10% of sworn responses.

I then reviewed civilian feedback, which was more measured in tone but echoed similar themes—particularly around communication, inclusion, and professional development. Civilians expressed appreciation for wellness initiatives and supportive supervisors, though some noted feeling undervalued compared to sworn staff.

The following information is a breakdown of the survey for sworn and civilian staff, which will inform ACPD's action plan moving forward:

Sworn Staff (52 respondents out of 163 total | ~31.9% participation)

Positives:

- 5 praised direct supervisors for fairness and professionalism (10%)
- 5 appreciated wellness initiatives like health clinics and recovery rooms (10%)
- 4 noted strong team camaraderie and peer support (8%)
- 5 valued recent training opportunities and requested more (10%)
- 3 acknowledged compensation benefits (6%)
- 2 expressed pride in ACPD's community mission (4%)

Negatives:

- 31 raised concerns about leadership transparency and favoritism (60%)
- 26 reported low morale, fear of retaliation, or mental health strain (50%)
- 21 cited poor communication and lack of follow-up (40%)
- 18 expressed frustration with promotion and advancement processes (35%)
- 13 requested more structured training and leadership development (25%)
- 10 distrusted HR and accountability mechanisms (19%)
- 8 raised concerns about diversity and inclusion efforts (15%)
- 5 criticized compensation and pay equity (10%)
- ~5 included personal attacks (8%)

Civilian Staff (8 respondents out of 28 total | ~28.6% participation)

Positives:

- 2 praised supervisors for inclusion and respect (25%)
- 2 appreciated wellness efforts and mental health support (25%)
- 2 highlighted strong teamwork and collaboration (25%)
- 2 valued onboarding and cross-training experiences (25%)
- 1 acknowledged compensation and benefits (13%)
- 1 expressed pride in public service mission (13%)

Negatives:

- 3 raised concerns about leadership and favoritism (38%)
- 2 noted fragile morale and lack of recognition (25%)
- 3 cited communication gaps and exclusion from decisions (38%)
- 2 wanted clearer career paths and mentorship (25%)
- 2 requested more consistent training and development (25%)
- 1 expressed concern about HR impartiality (13%)
- 1 raised diversity and inclusion concerns (13%)
- 1 criticized compensation clarity (13%)
- 0 personal attacks noted

Top shared positives:

- Supervisor support
- Wellness initiatives
- Team camaraderie

Top shared concerns:

- Leadership transparency
 - Decisions about transfers, promotions, and assignments are not clearly communicated.
 - Staff feel excluded from strategic planning or policy changes.
 - Leadership visibility is limited, creating a sense of detachment from frontline realities.
- Morale
 - Officers report emotional fatigue, stress, and a need for more consistent wellness support.
 - Some feel undervalued or disconnected from the department's mission.
 - There's a desire for recognition and a culture that supports psychological safety.
- Communication
 - Inconsistent messaging across supervisors leads to confusion and frustration.
 - Lack of follow-up after feedback or complaints makes staff feel unheard.
 - Officers want more inclusion in decisions that affect their roles and responsibilities
- Promotion fairness
 - Advancement processes feel unclear or inconsistently applied.
 - Some staff feel they lack access to development opportunities that would prepare them for promotion.
 - There's a desire for transparent criteria and feedback mechanisms.

Survey Action Plan:

- **Leadership Transparency**
 - Staff routinely receive notifications via e-mail about personnel transfers, retirements, and resignations. Of concern, many staff members readily admit to not reading e-mails, so PD leadership will have to ensure these changes are being disseminated during roll calls.
- **Morale**
 - Enhance communications with staff in reference to new and existing wellness initiatives:
 - Lighthouse Health & Wellness App – Private mobile access to wellness tools **(new)**
 - Peer Support & Mentor Team – Trained officers who understand what you're going through
 - Police psychologists Dr. Byron Greenberg and David Scheer **(newly contracted)**
 - Chaplain Services – Chaplain Jason Hartzog: hartzogj@albemarle.org
 - Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – www.albemarle.org/eap
 - CareACT Employee Health Clinic – Licensed psychologist available onsite **(new)**
 - ACPD Fitness Program – Physical wellness supports mental resilience. Please connect with Suzanne Becker, ACPD's Fitness Trainer, for personalized support and training plans- beckers@albemarle.org **(new)**
 - Employee Wellness and Recovery Rooms **(new)**
- **Communication**
 - Extended rollcalls to five days a week (consider moving to seven)
 - Weekly Executive Command Meetings
 - Weekly Commander Meetings
 - Weekly Captain Meetings **(new)**
 - Notification of complaint disposition is policy driven and dictated by employee law.
 - Installed Police Commanders on every shift **(new)**
 - Implemented monthly One-Pager notifications around PD **(new)**
- **Promotional Fairness**
 - Promotions for Police Sergeant and Police Lieutenant are held annually and follow policy
 - Professional Standards staff conduct information sessions for interested applicants
 - Eligibility lists are maintained for one year
 - HR is involved in our promotion processes
 - Facilitators meet with candidates afterwards
 - Candidates complete a survey
 - The Deputy Chief meets with those who are not promoted directly to provide feedback
 - The new Deputy Chief and Chief Administrative Officer will work with HR to review our current promotional processes and identify areas of improvement **(new)**