Body Worn Camera Training and Technical Assistance
Camden Police Department

Todd Maxwell: Hello again, listeners. This is Todd Maxwell, member of the Bureau of Justice Assistance Body-Worn Camera Team. And today I'm speaking with Captain Albert Handy and Assistant Chief Orlando Cuevas from the Camden County Police Department.

Captain Handy has 25 years of law enforcement experience in the city of Camden, New Jersey with the Camden City Police Department and the Camden County Police Department. He's currently serving as the BWC administrator for the CCPD. He coordinated the policy development as well as the implementation of the program. He received his Masters of Administrative Science degree from Fairleigh Dickerson – Dickinson, sorry, University.

Assistant Chief Orlando Cuevas has 26 years of law enforcement experience in Camden, New Jersey. He holds a Masters of Administrative Science degree from Fairleigh Dickinson University also. He also sits on the New Jersey attorney general policy development board, (participates) in the (pro-cops) research (implementing a) body-worn camera program. (Object) – project (manages the) BWC implementation and technology overhaul of (his) department.

Captain Handy and Assistant Chief Cuevas, thank you for speaking with me today.

Orlando Cuevas: Thank you for having us.

Albert Handy: Thank you.

Todd Maxwell: To start off, why did Camden decide to implement body-worn cameras?

Orlando Cuevas: Well, I think the reason – obviously there are several reasons. There (were) reasons that most people would have, such as wanting to document – better document evidence to make sure that any accusations against officers could be fully investigated and things like that.

But I think the prominent reasons for us to (wear) body cameras were more about customer service and making sure that our regular interactions were being performed in a way that we were actually preaching. In this era of ensuring that officers are acting procedurally just and kind of taking on that guardian versus warrior mentality, there's a lot of training being pushed out.

And far more frequently, we have issues of demeanor and minor things like that. And perhaps some of them go unsubstantiated if you really can't get a clear picture as to what occurred. But this in many cases gives you – in these cases will give you an unbiased opinion as to what occurred. And sometimes in situations where the officer may not realize just the tone of his voice – his or her voice can have an impact on a situation. So by and large, the reasons for us were more about customer service.

Todd Maxwell: So it sounds like you guys are using it as a training tool at times also?

Orlando Cuevas: Absolutely.

Todd Maxwell: So I was recently reading your report on the community outreach. Can you explain your community outreach process, especially around your BWC policy formation?

Orlando Cuevas: Sure. So we have regular interactions with the community through meetings and through the geographical commands of the agency, wherein the commanders organize meetings. We do a lot of social media outreach to make sure the residents of the city understand not only the body cameras but new projects as well. So it's just kind of messaging all the things that we're doing and body cameras are certainly a big part of that.

One of the things that we did with body cameras was, particularly, we worked closely with NYU to gain community impute through the process. Through NYU as sort of a neutral convener of information and survey. And just to take in the thoughts of the community through – not only through a survey, but through meetings.

Community meetings as well, that were help to get impute and solicit ideas. And just to make them aware of the deployment of the cameras and how they

would be implemented and certain departmental policies and then attorney general guidelines as well.

Todd Maxwell: So what would you say your biggest (inaudible) and choosing the right solution for your department?

Orlando Cuevas: I'm sorry, could you repeat the question, please?

Todd Maxwell: I said, what were the biggest obstacles you had when meeting with venders and choosing the right solution for your department?

Orlando Cuevas: I think one of the biggest challenges, and Captain Handy will join in –the expectations, I think, with technology sometimes don't meet the actual level of capability. And we're living in a world where technology's rapidly changing. But automations, storage life, battery life, a lot of the things that – disabling of the camera, automated activation of the camera, things like that we believe are in development and many are probably underway at this moment. But they just weren't there at this moment. So finding a system that fit the agency, also, in terms of budget all those things were of great importance to us.

Todd Maxwell: Captain Handy, did you have anything to add?

Albert Handy: Yes, just to chime in. We met with several vendors during the process of testing and evaluating. Like the assistant chief said, we (looked) for a device that best fit our operations and what we considered important to the agency from a functionally stand point. Things like in-house storage, battery life, efficient categorization of data, technology and functionality. Advanced features or the commitment to develop additional features.

Actually, many of the vendors we met with actually benefitted as much as we did from some of the ideas and some of the feedback that they got from us as far as functionality and things that we needed in the field. In the end we were able to select somebody that was able to deliver on most or all of those needs and functionality needs we were looking for.

But as far as the biggest obstacle, I'd say the time. The time and the process – going through the process of (doing) various devices to ultimately find what best meets your needs was probably the biggest obstacle (for) the process.

Todd Maxwell: And just as a background, can you tell the listeners how many officers your department has? How big of a agency it is?

Albert Handy: We have 322 cameras deployed and – of (a) 440 officer department.

Todd Maxwell: Great, thank you. It just gives everybody a little perspective. When you guys are – were looking for storage solutions, did you guys – do you all prefer (premise) or cloud solution for your digital media storage? And can you tell us why you went – or feel strongly one way or another?

Orlando Cuevas: So we selected to go with on-premise storage. I think it's important to know that we don't view this project as a one time purchase or a one time implementation. We think it's going to evolve, we expect it to evolve, so our options may change in the future.

But for us, the on-site storage, it clarifies any issues about data access. Any potentials for data access issues. But more importantly – or probably most significantly, (where) the environment – the financial environment we operate in. We had our grants and we identified funds and it was much more affordable for us to have this one time purchase rather than an annual recurring purchase.

Todd Maxwell: (Great), thank you. You guys are also part of BJA's violence reduction network. Do you think that BWC implementation will have any affect on overall reducing your violent crime?

Orlando Cuevas: There's no doubt. Traditionally, most people probably think of body cameras and associate it with transparency and (pursuing dually) just actions. But we've had experiences very recently – even investigative – certain investigations wherein we've gone back through the body cameras and we've married up other video streams to body camera footage to positively identify people – or suspects, people (who were later determined) to be suspects (in the field).

From the (evidentiary) perspective of helping officers better document crime scenes and things like that and little nuances. The research that goes into investigations, particularly with things that maybe have been lost in the officer's memory or that he didn't take specific notice to. Particularly when they're arriving at a critical incident, we find that officers with tunnel vision to help a victim or to go after a bad guy, sometimes the minor things don't make its way to the report. So we've found that they've been very useful in investigations thus far.

Todd Maxwell: I was reading recently that some municipalities around you are adding body-worn camera programs. Have you guys done any collaboration with them or the D.A.'s office to just sort of – in case a (mutual aid) happens or on how you're camera – or your videos will be used in court?

Albert Handy: Yes, we've – there (are) a number of agencies in our county here that have body-cameras, some carry the same device that we do. So we have partnered with them as (a) – kind of an information sharing group. I believe it helps all of us in identifying issues and solutions with our different programs.

So we have partnered in that regard. We've also partnered – like you mentioned, the prosecuting agency here, we partner with them as well and determine solutions that best fit their needs and getting them video for (evidentiary) purposes.

Todd Maxwell: And since you guys went on-premise, are you delivering hard disks to them for court cases.

Albert Handy: At this time, yes, we are downloading – providing them the hard disk. But we're also looking at other solutions going to forward that can create a more efficient process in that regard.

Todd Maxwell: So final question is, what (advice) would you give to other similarly sized agencies that are looking to implement body-worn cameras?

Orlando Cuevas: Well, I think many of the things you've alluded to, Todd, were collaborations, working with other agencies to identify need, best practices and equipment,

how agencies are fairing with the equipment that they have. We find that often times vendors, they will make promises – or perhaps there's misunderstanding of expectations, battery life being a very prime example. So they can lead people to kind of misunderstand what they're getting in for or what's involved in the decision making process.

Another really important factor is taking a very close look at the administrative task that you expect to deploy with your body camera, such as auditing and things like that. Those other tertiary type of tasks that you may not – that may not immediately come to mind when you decide to deploy body cameras that really are going to impact a department from a funding perspective in terms of manpower hours. So (you) would believe that there are solutions coming for many of them. But where they're at and how affordable they are, definitely going to impact a decision.

Todd Maxwell: And Captain Handy, do you have any advice for our listeners around the policy formation (on) an implementation (spot) that Deputy Chief Cuevas didn't cover?

Albert Handy: Yes. I mean, to add to what the assistant chief already mentioned, I would suggest research. Through the (I.C.), through the cop's office, PERF. There's a lot of best practices and reports out there available. So doing a little bit of research is certainly a suggestion.

Things like peer exchanges are always a good practice in my estimation. Other departments of similar size within their county or state. And those that have kind of similar policing challenges would always bee a good thing to do.

Performing a needs assessment I would recommend, identifying what is important to you. For us, a big element was keeping officers in the field and not losing efficiency with officers coming off the street to categorize video – or label video or to review video to do a report. So a solution for us was an application that would make that functionality available in the field.

So doing a needs assessment and kind of identifying what is important for your agency, what your needs are. Because it may not be the same and it may not match what the different vendors may be offering.

Outside of that, the only other recommendation I would make would be to do a pilot program. We did a pilot here of about 14 officers, where they wore the devices under a draft policy. And we were able to kind of test the device in the field, real time, against the policy and be able to get valuable feedback that was able to help us shape our program going forward.

Todd Maxwell: Well, I just wanted to say thank you both for taking time out of your busy schedules to join us and share the information you guys have with our listeners. We really appreciate it.

Male: Thank you for having us, Todd.

Male: Thank you.

Todd Maxwell: We encourage law enforcement, justice, public safety leaders whose agencies are interested in learning more about the implementation of body-worn camera programs to visit the body-worn camera toolkit at www.bja.gov/bwc. (The) toolkit offers a variety of resources agencies can use to help with the adoption and use of community engagement, policy development, data collection, officer training, (and) educational purposes.

We also encourage listeners to share and promote these resources with your colleagues and staff. Lastly, all these resources (and) especially the body-worn camera tool kid have been designed as national resource – your resource. Please submit any new ideas for content to the BWC support link at the bottom of the home page.

This is Todd Maxwell with the Bureau of Justice Assistance Body-Worn Camera Team signing off. Thank you for joining us today.

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