



A Virginia Accredited Law Enforcement Agency

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February 2, 2021

To whom it may concern:

Please let this letter serve as justification for a formal waiver request for the City of Winchester Police Department for its continued use of the MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicle.

The City of Winchester is situated in the Blue Ridge Valley approximately 75 mile west of Washington, DC. The city is 9 square miles and has a population of approximately 27,000 residents. There are four elementary schools, three middle schools and one high school within the city limits. Shenandoah University and 3 private schools are also located within the city limits. Winchester is a hub of retail, commercial, and industrial activities. The daytime population rises to approximately 55,000 during the work week. This is boosted by the fact Winchester is bordered by Interstate 81, and has 4 major highways, Routes 7, 11, 50, and 522 that travel through the city and into the Washington DC metro area. Winchester is also home to the Winchester Medical Center and Valley Health. The medical center is a Level II trauma center servicing multiple counties in Virginia and West Virginia.

The Winchester Police Department has 79 sworn officers performing law enforcement, criminal investigations, and animal control activities. On average the department services 50,000 calls for service each year. We provide 24 hour service and coverage for the city and assist the Frederick County Sheriff's Office with calls for service and SWAT related incidents.

Funding for an armored vehicle is not likely due to the city budget being constrained as it is. The department has a rapid response vehicle to assist with SWAT operations. This vehicle does not provide for ballistic protection upon approach to a target location, for an officer rescue, or for a barricade/hostage rescue situation.

The Winchester Police Department has used the MRAP vehicle in dozens of incidents in the past 6 years which have consisted of high risk warrant service, barricade incidents, and as a transport vehicle for inclement weather. The MRAP has been a valuable piece of equipment the city and officers of the department depend on. Not having the MRAP would require the department to wait for an agency with an armored vehicle to respond to the incident and would

take at least one hour or more. In that time period the incident could be neutralized or worse, deteriorate causing undue harm to officers, civilians, or the suspect.

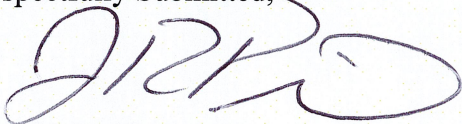
The City of Winchester is in the grips of an opiate epidemic and with that comes opiate dealers to the area. These dealers are routinely armed for protection. The Winchester Police Department assists the Northwest Regional Drug Task Force with the execution of drug search warrants against these opiate dealers which requires the use of an armored vehicle. The MRAP satisfies that requirement and has, and will, continue to keep officers safe while executing high risk search warrants.

The MRAP has proven very beneficial to have during inclement weather. We have used the MRAP to pick up essential hospital workers who could not get to work due to deep snow as well as our own essential employees.

The members of the department SWAT Team trains twice a year on driving the vehicle and performing life saving officer/civilian rescues from the vehicle. Thankfully our agency has not had to put that training to the test but it is available to us or surrounding agencies should the need arise.

Please consider the MRAP waiver for the Winchester Police Department as it has been a valuable piece of equipment the city has relied on for the past 6 years. Taking it away from the department could endanger the lives of the department officers and city residents. Thanks you for your time in this matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JIP", with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Chief John Piper