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## **Foster's Daily Democrat Monday, July 10, 2006**

Durham police chief featured in national newsletter

By THOMAS R. KRESSLER  
Democrat Staff Writer

DOVER — For a smaller police department, Durham thrives on big ideas, at least according to The International Association of Chiefs of Police, which has published an article written by Chief David Kurz in a summer newsletter.

The article, developed with support from the national Bureau of Justice Administration, discusses strategic planning, and will appear in the IACP's "Big Ideas for Smaller Police Departments," publication.

"In Durham, when I arrived ten years ago, the message I received from the residents was this was a highly regarded police department, but it wasn't perceived or viewed as very user friendly," Kurz said during a phone interview Friday.

A solution was to institute a strategic plan with input from the community, the process of which is outlined in Kurz's article.

"The department determined to treat its constituents as partners and customers and like any good business, find out what its customers wanted," Kurz writes. He describes police departments as being in the business of providing services to customers, in this case the taxpayers.

"That's not a complicated leap of faith, but I think it's one that may be missed in the public sector on occasion — generally speaking, in the public sector you get in trouble when you forget why it is you're doing what you're doing."

Comprised of three phases, the development of a strategic plan, Kurz writes, includes a community survey designed to measure the town's perception of police, an interdepartmental survey which critiques the department's management, and a daylong planning session with community leaders.

Kurz said a clearly outlined plan for the department is critical, even in a smaller police department with limited resources. He suspects the interest of the IACP and the Bureau of Justice Administration has to do with informing smaller departments that forward-thinking steps are possible even while just struggling to handle calls for service.

"It provides goals and objectives that we can reach for and that doesn't mean we're always going to get there, but at least there's a measurement of how successful we were trying to get there, or what we need to do different," Kurz said.

According to Town Councilor Peter Smith, the police department under Kurz is an impressive organization, in part because of his deftness in dealing with the public.

"He has built a department in which this left-wing guy, Peter Smith, has complete confidence that they are

really professionals," Smith said.

Kurz said the process is also "designed to ensure that the officers understand that there is a mission: to serve the citizens of Durham."

The department's strategic plan, first drafted in 1997, is updated annually. Internal and community surveys are compiled every three years, and the community planning day is done annually, though it was not held this year due to time constraints.

Kurz said the plan also provides quantifiable information to justify his decisions. "This is a council that doesn't want anecdotal enforcement. They want me to quantify and tell them why I need what I need."

In law enforcement since 1974, Kurz has been police chief in Durham since 1996.

The publication can be viewed on The International Association of Chiefs of Police website at [www.theiacp.org](http://www.theiacp.org).