



# WINCHESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT

CHIEF KEVIN L. SANZENBACHER  
MAJOR DAVID H. WHITE  
CAPTAIN KELLY S. RICE  
CAPTAIN LEONARD M. BAUSERMAN  
CAPTAIN DOUGLAS R. WATSON

231 EAST PICCADILLY STREET, SUITE 310  
WINCHESTER, VIRGINIA 22601  
PHONE: (540) 545-4700 OR (540) 545-4730  
FAX: (540) 542-1314  
EMAIL: [WPDCHIEF@CI.WINCHESTER.VA.US](mailto:WPDCHIEF@CI.WINCHESTER.VA.US)  
WEBSITE: [WWW.WINCHESTERPOLICE.ORG](http://WWW.WINCHESTERPOLICE.ORG)

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## PRESS RELEASE

**December 7, 2011**

The Winchester Police Department has concluded the administrative investigation into the officer involved shooting that occurred on October 14, 2011. This shooting followed the bank robbery of the United Bank on Berryville Ave. The finding of the Department is that the officers' actions on that date were appropriate and within policy. The Department further found that the officers acted with bravery and professionalism and their actions lead to the swift identification of the suspect.

Each time an officer is involved in a duty related discharge of a firearm the Department conducts a thorough and in-depth investigation into the actions of the officer(s). This analysis includes many factors that include; a review of the circumstances leading to the officer's decision to use deadly force, an accountability for each shot fired, and a review of the background the officer faced to insure the decision to fire would not endanger innocent bystanders.

In order for a shooting to be found within policy the officer(s) must be able to prove that each shot fired met the Department Rules and Regulations for the discharge of firearms. These policies are based upon industry standards, court rulings and precedent for police use of force. The Winchester Police Department is one of 28 police departments in the State accredited by the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission. This means that all of our policies have been independently reviewed and meet or exceed State and National standards.

Key to the "In Policy" finding in this instant case were the following findings:

- Prior to their arrival on the scene the officers were told, via police radio, that they were dealing with an armed bank robbery that had just occurred and were given a description of the suspect;

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- The suspect fired upon the first responding officer as he was exiting his vehicle;
- The suspect then fled on foot;
- The first officer chased the suspect on foot;
- The suspect fired again at the first officer;
- The suspect was able to get to his car and was driving erratically in an effort to flee;
- Despite the danger to themselves the officers withheld immediate return fire at this point due to having children and a school building in the background;
- Once the suspect had moved to allow the officers a clear shot, two of the three officers on the scene tried to disable the suspect by firing at him, in his vehicle, in order to prevent the still armed and dangerous suspect from continuing to flee and endangering other officers and civilians;
- The third officer withheld his fire because he never got a clear field of fire;
- The officers were successful in forcing the suspect to crash and preventing an extended pursuit;
- Once the vehicle was disabled the officers established cover, called for a ballistic shield to provide them adequate protection in approaching the vehicle, and then insured the vehicle was cleared before allowing other officers to approach.

Now that we have completed our thorough and objective review of the facts we can say that the Winchester Police Department is very proud of the actions of the officers on this date. They confronted an extremely dangerous situation with bravery and professionalism. In an exceedingly stressful situation they remained calm, followed their training (even reloading on the run to make sure they had a full magazine), and put themselves at risk to insure the safety of the public and fellow officers. It was only bad luck that allowed the suspect vehicle to come to rest over a perfect escape route that permitted the suspect to get away undetected. The officers had no way of knowing this at the time.

However, if it were not for the swift and confident actions of the first responding officers this suspect may have never been identified. Through their actions, within three hours of the crime, the WPD, with help of our partners from the County and City Sheriff, State Police and the FBI, had identified the suspect and had his photo ID in hand and being circulated in the community.

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We believe this is just one, although extreme, example of the service the men and women in law enforcement provide every day. The goal of the Winchester PD is to have a well trained, properly equipped and supported, and physically fit officer at any emergency situation anywhere in the City in under 5 minutes. We believe we met and exceeded our objective in this case and we hope the citizens of Winchester see this reflected in our service.

If you have any questions about this press release please contact Chief Kevin Sanzenbacher at 540-545-4701.

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