



Webster Police Department

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Michael D. Shaw
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Community Committed

Deputy Chief Tobby M. Wheeler
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Well 2020 was a year that none of us will ever forget anytime soon. It started off much like any other year, but once March 11th came, our lives were changed, and we had to adapt to a new sense of "normal." The Webster Police Department adapted, like the rest of the world, and took things in stride. We changed up some practices and procedures, gritted our teeth, and prepared for the worst. What didn't change was our commitment to serving our community through these trying times. We continued to serve through not only our patrol and investigative section, but through community events (when we could finally have them), and everyday interactions. While traffic was reduced, and businesses adapted to new restrictions, we continued to respond to your needs. As you can see, our calls for service dropped by about 1,000 for the year, but the first few months of the Pandemic definitely saw a reduction in calls for service, as well as traffic accidents and citations. Things would pick up through the summer, fall and the remainder of 2020. We saw cases related to the virus dip, and then pick back up, and with it so did our activity. Our proactive patrol work increased, and we saw phenomenal results by the men and women that work here. We also were able to get a few community events in as well, which brought with them a sense of normalcy. One highlight of the year was the extraordinary teamwork displayed by the Webster Police Department, Webster Fire Department, and Webster Emergency Medical Service professionals. This played a large role in keeping our collective staff safe, so that we could better serve you.

So we rolled in to 2020 like any other year. Coming off of a successful 2019, we picked up right where we left off. Children joined us for breakfast and rides to school, we ran our Hoops for Hopes basketball program during February vacation, and we even saw the return of Big Time Wrestling to the Town Hall, where wrestling legend Brett Hart made an appearance. Our Community Policing Programs are funded by fundraisers such as Big Time Wrestling, as well as donations from citizens that see the value in building positive relationships with our community. It goes without saying of course that we would be nothing without the men and women that give their time to make these programs possible.

We also saw the assignment of Bruce Hamm from Patrol to Detective. Detective Hamm had already shown a knack for investigations through various cases he had investigated as a patrolman. He was also very active with the Central Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council Accident Reconstruction Unit. He joined Detective Joseph Reed, who had been in the Detective Bureau since June of 2019. Together they formed a great team, and filled a void in our Detective Bureau that had existed for far too long.

Our officers changed up their appearance somewhat, going to an outer vest style carrier. Generations of Police Officers have worn a "duty belt" which is how they would carry all of their equipment. The outer carrier allows them to take the weight off of their hips, and displace it onto their upper body, with the idea of reducing injuries and fatigue. Officer James Young Jr.

From the shores of
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had approached me about the idea, and I authorized him to proceed with it, as long as it was still professional looking. He did an outstanding job and many departments have followed suit with this.

In March Worcester County District Attorney Joe Early purchased a program called Critical Incident Management System (CIMS). This is a software program that enables police departments all across Worcester County to be able to track individuals that have, or are at risk of, overdosing from opiates. This allows departments to be notified when a resident of their city or town overdoses in another city or town. This way the individual can be notified and referred to services, should they so desire. This was a vital component that we were missing when we performed our outreach visits, as there were many individuals that were suffering from addiction, which we simply did not know about. CIMS provided a tool to bridge that gap, and has proved quite useful in its use to date.

To that end, the Webster Police Department has been performing outreach to those afflicted to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) for a few years now. Currently, the Webster Police Department has four Community Outreach Advocates, Jennifer Genduso, Shannon Daggett, Jennifer Comeau, and Brian Tvelia. They team up with officers from the Department and respond to those not just afflicted with SUD from opiates, but from any type of substance they are addicted to. We have seen some great success with this type of approach, and I think that again, the Webster Police Department leads the way in yet another vital area that affects our population greatly.

Once March 11th came, Governor Baker announced a State of Emergency surrounding Corona Virus. One of the biggest issues we faced early on was the severe shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We were fortunate with the assistance of Webster Health Director Jen Sullivan to get some of the town's PPE into the hands of our officers, paramedics, and fire fighters. We also were very fortunate to be the recipients of numerous donations of PPE from private citizens and corporations. With the nationwide shortage of PPE that we were experiencing, these much needed supplies early on were essential in outfitting our first responders.

In addition to the generously donated PPE that we were so fortunate to receive, we also scoured the internet and were able to come across supplies which allowed us to make our own hand sanitizer. These first few weeks were filled with uncertainty as our country saw shortages of Lysol wipes, toilet paper, hand sanitizer, and other essential items that we took for granted on an everyday basis. Fortunately, we were able to scrounge enough supplies to get us in those early stages of the pandemic.

In addition to getting our officers much needed PPE, we adjusted some of our procedures here at the station, especially as it came to responding to calls. We advised officers to handle calls over the phone when appropriate, cancelled all of our proactive patrols and traffic enforcement shifts, had officers exit through the rear and side entrances of the building, and enhanced our cleaning processes in our station.

Many area departments were cancelling vacations, changing schedules to minimize the potential loss of staffing, and various other changes that had a direct impact on their officers. We, as a Command Staff, felt confident in the temporary changes we made. We constantly monitored the situation, and stressed the importance of PPE and social distancing to our officers. Over the course of the year, I estimate we had close to 20 officers get tested for COVID-19, with no one testing positive until December. Proof that our approach was successful, as our calls for service dipped slightly, but the total number of persons charged in 2020 (1,348) versus 2019 (1,319) was only lower by 30. We did see more offenders summoned into court than the previous year, which was done to avoid having possible COVID-19 people in our station, thus minimizing exposure to our officers, as well as the members of the South Worcester County Communications Center, whose job it is to monitor the prisoners.

As the pandemic waned on, we saw an outpouring of generosity from our community like never before. Point Breeze organized First Responder Fridays, where meals were paid for by a local business or individual for the First Responders and Hospital. We also saw Big Belly Café provide lunch on Mondays, and numerous other local businesses dropped off meals, or tokens of appreciation. The list is too long to mention, but I can assure you every gesture was greatly appreciated, and I would encourage anyone reading this to “shop or eat local” whenever you have the opportunity. The small businesses truly are a big part of our community!

As summer arrived, we were finally able to hold one of our annual community events, our “Duck Off.” We had to do it virtually, which we were getting more accustomed to with the advent of Zoom meetings being more commonplace. It was a success and, through the generosity of many people, we were able to raise some much needed funds for our Community Policing account.

At the end of May, the world watched in horror as the disturbing video of the arrest of George Floyd went viral. This video not only angered civilians, but angered police officers as well across the country, brushing the entire profession with a broad stroke for the tainted actions of a few. The nation saw protests demanding police reform erupt across the country, to include here in Massachusetts.

Webster was not immune to this, and a protest was set to happen in our town on June 6th. Many citizens and business expressed concern over the safety and security of their town,

fearing the worst would happen. Clearly the scenes that had unfolded in cities and towns across America were troubling to say the least, so their concern was completely understandable.

I met with the organizers, and a plan was developed and implemented with resounding success. Approximately 300 people gathered and voiced their concerns, and only one arrest was made, which was that of a citizen that drove his motorcycle past the police barricade. We would not have been able to have the event that we did without the assistance from the numerous police agencies that helped us that day. Thank you all again for your support, your presence was instrumental in our event going smooth.

It goes without saying that I made a statement during that event that many people across the country took exception to, including many of my colleagues. My family, my department, and my community not only stood by my side during this difficult time, but made strong statements demonstrating exactly that. I am eternally grateful to you all for this. Thank you.

We saw cases from COVID-19 start to decrease around this time, so we reinstated our traffic grants, started up some proactive patrols, and encouraged our officers to be more proactive with their patrol efforts. While we saw traffic still rather light, our officers were back at it, and we became accustomed to doing things a little different than we had in years past, but this was necessary to keep our officers and the public safe.

We held our annual Junior Police Academy, and were thrilled to graduate 10 students. We said goodbye to some that had been with us for several years, while also saying hello to some new faces that we hope will be with us for years to come. Our Marine Patrol with our new boat, the Carolina Skiff, was put into service under the direction of Harbormaster Sergeant Chris Trainor. We also had several additional officers trained in the Marine Patrol.

We partnered with the Greek Orthodox Church and held a Community Meal, which featured handmade sandwiches made by parishioners of the church to be distributed to those in need in front of the Webster Town Hall. We decided to have our first ever Cruise Night in the summer and it was a huge success. Finally, we partnered with Our Bright Future and played with some great kids in a fun kickball game. We came away with a victory, but I think we are in trouble next year.

In the fall we held our first non-Civil Service entry level exam. We had 75 individuals take the test, and then 42 come to take the physical fitness exam. We are currently finishing the hiring process, but everyone involved thus far has seen the benefits of our change in hiring this new way, versus the way we hired officers under Civil Service.

Officer Thomas Motyka joined us in September, as he transferred into our Department from the Wilbraham Police Department. We saw COVID-19 cases start to rise as children went back to school remotely. November brought the promotion of Detective Joseph Reed to Sergeant, and Sergeant Chris Trainor took over the Detective Bureau.

In October we were able to participate in Downtown Trick or Treating, as well sponsoring Trunk or Treat with the Webster Recreation Committee down at Memorial Beach. Some of you may have noticed we did some decorating for Halloween this year, which admittedly was a lot of fun. We are already planning for next year, so watch out!

We saw Officer Michael Reardon laterally transfer to the Millbury Police Department, as well as Officer Michael Yurkevicius and Sergeant Patrick Perry retire. We wish them all well in their future endeavors, and thank them for their service to the Town of Webster.

The year concluded with our annual Toy and Winter Coat Drives, as well as a Santa Parade around town. We are hopeful that next year we will be able to resume all of our activities in the community, as we very much miss that aspect of our job. It is clearly more important now than ever.

Our total number of calls for service were down by about 1,400. I can attribute this to the early stages of the pandemic, when everyone was locked down. Also noted in our year end statistics is the sharp decrease in traffic accidents, as well as citations. These are also related to the pandemic, in that we saw a sharp decrease in traffic which correlated in less accidents, as well as less citations. We had also suspended our traffic enforcement grants early on as well, in an effort to protect our officers from unnecessary possible exposure to the Coronavirus. Our in custody arrest were down by 115, while our summonses were up by 36 from last year. I would estimate that our numbers for all categories will be back to where they were Pre COVID-19 conditions by the end of 2021.

This year we investigated 13 complaints against officers, with two of those originating internally. The two complaints originating internally were sustained. Of the complaints that originated externally, three were not investigated due to the complainant not cooperating with the investigating officer. Six were unfounded, and two were sustained. If anyone wishes to file a complaint against an officer, they may contact the shift supervisor, who will either investigate the complaint, or forward it to my office for further investigation.

2020 undoubtedly brought with it a host of challenges that many of us never saw coming. No one predicted that our lives would be impacted to the extent they were. One positive thing that came out of 2020 was the Webster Public Safety Team of Police, Fire, EMS, and Dispatch was stronger than ever. We worked tirelessly through all of the challenges thrown at us to

serve all of you. Our team has never been stronger, and we look forward to better times in 2021!

Respectfully

Michael Shaw
Chief of Police

TOWN OF WEBSTER ANNUAL CRIME REPORT 2020

OFFENSE TYPE	2019	2020
Murder and Manslaughter	0	0
Kidnapping/Abduction	5	3
Forcible Rape	16	12
Statutory Rape	5	13
Forcible Fondling	4	6
Robbery	4	8
Aggravated Assault	135	131
Simple Assault	292	358
Intimidation	59	67
Arson	0	4
Burglary/Breaking and Entering	60	50
Pocket-Picket	3	1
Purse-Snatching	1	1
Shoplifting	22	15
Theft from Building	45	51
Theft from Motor Vehicle	34	17

All Other Larceny	118	98
Motor Vehicle Theft	16	22
Counterfeiting/Forgery	10	30
False Pretenses/Swindling	62	36
Credit Card/Automatic Teller	7	2
Impersonation	23	82
Embezzlement	0	0
Stolen Property Offenses	11	14
Destruction/Vandalism/Damage	140	130
Drug/Narcotic Violations	103	156
Pornography/Obscene Material	6	8
Prostitution/Assisting Promoting Prost.	0	1
Weapons Law Violations	32	30
Bad Checks	0	0
Disorderly Person	140	145
Driving Under The Influence	112	74
Drunkenness	82	29
Family Offenses, Non-Violent	0	1
Runaway/Missing Person	0	0

Liquor Law Violations	37	15
Trespass of Real Property	32	41
All Other Offenses	244	299
Traffic, Town By Law Offenses	1248	1205
Total Number of Calls	23,425	22,065
Total Number People Arrested	663	548
Total Number of People Summoned in For Various Offenses	734	770
Total Number of Citations Issued	2916	1326
Total Number of Traffic Accidents	450	304