



# **Town of Webster Police Department**

**"Improving the Quality of Life"**

**Chief Timothy J. Bent**

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## **REPORT OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

The Webster Police Department had another busy year, with an increase in the total number of incidents/calls for service up from 19,790 in 2008 to 21,027 in 2009. We again concentrated heavily on our community policing efforts. Our summer programs, and time spent with Webster's youth, were again beneficial to all who participated. "Hoops for Hope", "National Night Out", and a trip to the Paw Sox game were a great deal of fun. We have reached a pinnacle where we expect great partnerships to be formed between Webster's youth and police. We also enjoy working with Bartlett students who volunteer for our various projects. The Webster Fraternal Order of Police funded and delivered food baskets to Webster families on both Thanksgiving and Christmas. Our Christmas toy drive had a record-breaking year; well over three hundred Webster children were blessed. Thank you to everyone who contributed; your kindness and compassion are greatly appreciated.

As a result of our creative fund raising, mainly "Big Time Wrestling" at the Town Hall, we were able to financially sponsor Winter Wonderland this year. This was an opportunity for all Town employees to pitch in and help this popular event. Thank you to the Department of Public Works, Parks Department, Bartlett students, Cafeteria workers, and all who made the event such a success. To those of you who donated your time and services, our community thanks you.

In an effort to enhance our proactive policing, we concentrated on our Main Street walking patrols. Officers walked frequently throughout the course of the year. We also concentrated heavily on enforcing pedestrian crosswalk safety in the Main Street area. This was accomplished through officers specifically assigned to monitor crosswalks and ensure that vehicles stop for pedestrians. Overall, a conscious effort was placed on the safe operation of motor vehicles Town-wide. A total of 2,015 citations were issued in 2009, an increase of 498 citations over the previous year.

We also focused heavily on our Marine Patrol. Lake patrols were conducted throughout the course of the summer. On a few occasions, when manpower and funding allowed, two patrols were on the lake simultaneously. It was necessary to update our ageing police boats, so we updated the newer of the two vessels. We then traded in a boat that was seized by HIDTA (the drug task force), and with accompanying funds from the HIDTA seizure account, we purchased a 2007 Thundermist Police Boat to replace the 1986 Wahoo vessel. This valuable purchase came at no cost to the Town and will serve the Marine Patrol for years to come. We will continue to evaluate the program to ensure that boating regulations are enforced and rules are followed. Due to the crowds at Memorial Beach, a walking patrol was added to the beach and boat ramp on weekends. This was funded through a Community Policing Grant. Unfortunately, that particular grant, which has been funded for years, has been cut from the State's budget.

During these difficult financial times, I am extremely proud of the men and women of the police department for voluntarily waiving their contractual right to holiday

**from the shores of  
"Lake Chaggoggagoggmanchauggagoggchaubunagungamaugg"**

pay. This concession paved the way for other employee unions, assisting the budget and preventing layoffs. As the Town is financially stretched beyond its limit, it becomes increasingly difficult for all departments to provide a level of services that the tax payers have come to expect. As the local police department is the first line of defense in our homeland, it is imperative that our budgets remain fully funded.

Sergeant William Keefe retired in November after twenty three years of service to the Town of Webster. Sergeant Keefe served many roles within the Webster Police Department, most notably as Provisional Police Chief. Sergeant Keefe's dedication and experience will be missed. Officer Joseph Brooks was promoted to Sergeant in December. Sergeant Brooks will serve well in this capacity. The Town hired two patrolmen, Officers Dale Mimeault and Robert Larochelle. Their salaries and benefits are funded by a three-year grant. Webster was one of thirteen departments in Massachusetts to receive this award. Both officers are a welcome addition. The Town also accepted the resignations of Permanent Intermittent Officers Steven Yurkevicius and Travis Gould.

Our police department's command staff worked tirelessly to obtain new grants and manage existing grants. The Town was awarded a U.S. Department of Justice COPS Hiring Recovery Program Grant. Working in conjunction with the Town Accountant's Office, the total award of this grant was \$496,452.00. We were also awarded a Department of Justice Recovery Act Grant in the amount of \$40,236.00. This grant was used to purchase lap top computers for the cruisers. We were also the recipient of a State 911 Grant in the amount of \$38,473.00. This will be used for personnel costs and equipment. Our South Worcester County Drug and Counter Crime Task Force also received another award in the amount of \$25,000.00. Webster is the fiduciary of this task force. We also assisted the Webster Public Schools in preparing a Secure Our Schools Grant in the amount of \$92,000.00. This is a matching grant that allows, among other things, camera installation in Bartlett High School.

The Police Station Building Committee was busy. With twenty thousand dollars that was appropriated at Town Meeting, the Town has hired The Lawrence Associates. This firm will make plans for the new police station, as well as prepare plans for the fire station's rehabilitation. At the writing of this report, that work is underway. The firm is also studying building sites for the police station.

Our total number of in-custody arrests increased slightly over the previous year. We observed a substantial decrease in the number of people summonsed to court. We also recorded some increases, and decreases, in categories relating to crimes against property. We did note a sharp increase in shoplifting offenses, more than double the previous year, no doubt due to the economy (this could also be due to the fact that merchants are becoming more diligent). Crimes against the person remained consistent. We recorded an increase in the robbery category, from seven the previous year to fourteen, and a slight increase in the assault category. We also noted a substantial increase in the amount of disorderly conduct charges. On a disturbing note, we observed a substantial increase in weapons law violations, from ten the previous year to twenty seven in 2009.

Thank you again to the men and women of the Webster Police Department. As economic growth has declined, our jobs in law enforcement have grown increasingly difficult. With budget cuts and revenue problems, it is a challenge at times to maintain morale. Our officers continue to meet that challenge with great resolve. As I have stated many times before, our officers' commitment and attitude make us all proud. As our nation hopefully makes the adjustment from recession to recovery, our department will make the adjustment as well.

The Chief's office received three written citizen complaints regarding police conduct during the course of the year. One resulted in a "sustained" finding; one resulted in a "not sustained" finding, and one with an "unfounded" finding. Citizen complaints regarding police department personnel may be directed to the shift supervisor who, in turn, will either investigate the complaint or forward the same to the Chief's office for further investigation.

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy J. Bent  
Chief of Police

