



Town of Webster
Police Department
"Improving the Quality of Life"
Chief Timothy J. Bent

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REPORT OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

It was a year in which our police department, and Town, made positive improvements in the area of downtown revitalization. Thank you once again, Mr. and Mrs. Fels and the Fels Family Foundation, for your vision and commitment toward making the Town of Webster a better place. In an unprecedented show of support, the Fels Family Foundation provided the Webster Police Department with a private grant assuming the financing of an officer's salary for a period of two years. This act brought great media attention and some controversy. In the end, it will bring a greater police presence, as well as a positive and much needed boost to the community-oriented development of Main Street. The grant will provide a police walking beat, which will in turn reduce crime, and the fear of crime, in the area.

The Fels Family Foundation grant brings the total of officers who are currently employed through grants to three. If you recall, we hired two officers through a U.S. Department of Justice COPS Hiring Recovery Grant. That grant was for a three-year period. We are now halfway through that grant. Both grants should come to term and expire at approximately the same time. It is imperative that we maintain our current staffing levels, thirty (30) full-time officers including the Chief, if we are to remain effective.

We were busy throughout the year with our fundraising and community-policing efforts. As the Town is without a recreation department, the police department has assumed those responsibilities for several years now. "Big Time Wrestling" at the Town Hall continues to be our major fundraiser. As an added bonus, we were able to purchase ten (10) new picnic tables for Memorial Beach. We also purchased American flags for the telephone poles on Main, South Main, and East Main Streets, as well as window flags for the Town Hall. With help from public donations, we were also fortunate to be able to fund and organize Winter Wonderland at Memorial Beach. Our Toy Drive observed another successful year only through the generosity of our residents. Over three hundred children were again blessed. Our other youth outreach programs also experienced growth. We attempt to bring new fundraising shows and fresh ideas to our outreach programs. To that end, we brought a night of boxing back to the Town Hall. Uptown Boxing filled the auditorium for an exciting evening. Among other bouts scheduled on the card, Webster Police Officers boxed Southbridge Officers. Proceeds from the event benefited the Webster K-9 program and the Webster Little League. At the writing of this report, we are busy planning an oldies concert in May, along with a Big Band night of dancing this summer.

As our Town still struggles financially, we did our share of financing equipment through grants and our Law Enforcement Drug Seizure Trust Account. We desperately needed two new cruisers but were unfortunately only budgeted for one. We purchased the second through our drug seizure account. We also purchased a thermal imaging camera for that cruiser. This piece of equipment helps us locate individuals in the dark by a heat detection imaging system that displays on the cruiser's computer

laptop. Through the same account, we also purchased a speed trailer that I'm sure you have seen throughout Town.

As the safety of our officers has always been paramount, we became one of the first departments in Central Massachusetts to train and be certified to carry Tasers. This was a long and involved process that required certification through the Executive Office of Public Safety. Twelve officers are now certified and carrying this piece of equipment. Again, the Tasers and accompanying equipment came at no cost to the Town but from our seizure account.

As we evaluated our K-9 program, we felt it prudent to train another dog. We ask a great deal from K-9 "Red". Not only does he perform drug detection work, but he is also asked to perform patrol work consisting of tracking lost people and suspects, handler protection, and bite work. This is referred to as a multi-purpose dog. Officer Suss, our K-9 handler, felt another dog would be a benefit by concentrating on the patrol work, thereby allowing K-9 "Red" to solely concentrate on drug work. Our only issue was that we did not have the funding to purchase another animal, as they are very expensive. Being the dedicated officer that he is, Officer Suss personally purchased K-9 "Radar". K-9 "Radar" is a Dutch Shepherd bred specifically for police work. Officer Suss has been involved with K-9 "Radar" since he was a puppy. At the time of this report, K-9 "Radar" is roughly eighteen months old, and his training is coming along better than we expected. The need for a more dependable K-9 vehicle also became an issue. Now having two dogs, we outfitted our 2003 Ford Expedition. The final touches included body and engine work, new paint, new lights, lettering, and a new vehicle kennel. Again, this came at no cost to the Town; all the vehicle maintenance came from our drug seizure and K-9 accounts.

Officer Dale Mimeaule, hired through the COPS Hiring Recovery Grant, left us for the Worcester Fire Department. We wish Firefighter Mimeaule well. We hired Officers Robert Ela and Joseph Reed full-time. Both officers were Permanent Intermittent Officers (Sub-Patrolmen). We also hired four new Permanent Intermittent Officers, Timothy Whiting, James Nalewajk, Bruce Hamm, and David O'Connor. Reserve Captain Norman Chenevert retired after over thirty years with the Reserve Unit. Captain Chenevert's experience and dedication will be missed.

The Police Station Building Committee was again very busy throughout the year. By the time this report is released, the committee will have announced its plans to move forward. The idea of a new police station located downtown will definitely go a long way in the revitalization of the Main Street. Rehabilitating the Thompson Road site for the Fire and Rescue Departments will serve the Town's Public Safety Departments well into the future. It is important to us, and to the welfare of the Town, that our residents support us in these endeavors. What else can be said or printed about Mr. and Mrs. Fels.

I had hoped that I would be writing how our crime statistics had decreased this year. Unfortunately, like most of the country, crime levels have increased. Our total number of incidents increased from the previous year by 1,355 calls. This naturally kept us somewhat more reactive, as opposed to proactive. We recorded a rise in almost every

crime category. Sexual assaults, along with other crimes against the person, and crimes against property observed increases that are disconcerting. It can be argued that increases in robbery, larceny, shoplifting, and breaking and entering can be attributed to the economy. Weapons Law violations recorded an alarming increase. This category is up substantially two years in a row. The world in which we live has become increasingly more violent, and our Town is no exception. Our residents must understand that you have our sworn commitment that we will continue to keep you safe. We also noted a decrease in drug violations, which is no doubt due to the civil penalty on marijuana possession.

Our South Worcester County Counter Crime and Drug Task Force continues to make great strides. Although grant money for these task forces has virtually ended, we did receive an encouraging amount of funding from District Attorney Joseph Early's office. The Webster Police Department remains very active in the Central Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (CMLEC). As a refresher, CMLEC operates SWAT, Accident Reconstruction, and a Motorcycle Unit for the Cities and Towns representing Central Massachusetts. Members of the Webster Police Department are a driving force in these operations, having three (3) officers (Shaw, Collins, Lee) assigned to SWAT, as well as a hostage negotiator (Perry). Webster Sergeant Michael Shaw is the SWAT Team Leader. We also have two (2) officers (Moran, Nedoroscik) assigned to the Accident Reconstruction Team, as well as two (2) officers (Reardon, Lee) assigned to the Motorcycle Unit. I was humbled in December 2010 to be chosen by the Central Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association as the President of the Central Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council.

Thank you to all our officers, who protect us day and night. Although crime rates nationwide continue to rise, your efforts are not in vain and do not go unappreciated. During the coming year, we will continue to evaluate our services, analyze our data, and direct our efforts at areas of concern.

The Chief's office received seven complaints regarding police conduct during the course of the year. Six resulted in "sustained" findings; one resulted in a "not sustained" 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