

2002 Amherst Police Report

The past year presented challenges in the Department's efforts to provide the best possible service to the Town of Amherst. The Department operated short staffed by as many as five officers during the majority of the year due to resignations, as well as by officers who were called to serve our country in the military during these difficult times. The depleted staff was called on to work many more hours, and share more responsibilities in our efforts to deliver a proper level of service to the community. The men and women of the Amherst Police Department rose to the challenge, and the result was a positive, productive year in maintaining Amherst as a safe community. As the year came to a close, the long process of hiring and training new personnel was being completed and the Department anticipated a return to proper staffing levels.

In reviewing statistics for the past year, many of the categories that were affected by self-initiated officer activity showed a decline due to the lower levels of patrol. These included the actual miles patrolled, the number of arrests, the total amount of traffic enforcement, and the total number of reports. These lower numbers, though expected, are troubling in that they are the backbone for the Department's preventative approaches to crime reduction and highway safety. A return to standard staffing levels will assist the Department in increasing the self-initiated activity of the Department. Typically, the Department reviews several areas in assessing the effectiveness of our traffic safety efforts and our crime reduction efforts. Though there are additional factors that drive the number of motor vehicle crashes, the Department does not consider itself successful with our traffic safety program unless there is a reduction in the number and severity of crashes. For the third year in a row, the number of crashes in Town increased, rising 8.6% over the previous year. The only positive note was that the number of injuries reported declined by 9% over the previous year.

The Department views total crime numbers, as well as the occurrence of burglary, as benchmarks in our efforts to reduce crime. Burglary has been a targeted crime for many years in our efforts to maintain the quality of life in Amherst. Over the past several years the Department has been successful in reducing the number of burglaries from all time highs of near 100 per year to averages in the mid thirties per year. Last year the Department reported a total of **six** burglaries for the entire year, an unheard of number for a community of our population. We take great pride in accomplishing this task, in conjunction with the community, and will continue to work closely with the residents in an effort to maintain this low burglary rate. Total criminal reports also declined, though by a more modest total of 1.3%.

The Department is not seeking any new programs in the proposed budget. Two new programs that were initially budgeted for last year will actually occur during this calendar year. After using a demonstration unit for testing, the Department will be purchasing a radar display trailer for use in our traffic safety program. One quarter of the cost of this unit was raised via donations from local businesses and service clubs. This unit will be deployed throughout the Town in an effort to educate motorists to their speed on our local roads. The program to implement a School Resource Officer in our Middle School was delayed due to our staffing problems, and will be implemented in September 2003. Both the Department and the school look to this position with much anticipation as we feel it will be a great addition to our existing school programs.

Successful policing efforts must be a community wide effort. Without the eyes and ears of the community to assist the police department, either more funds are required to staff a larger department, or the quality of life erodes as crime and safety issues increase. We strongly encourage citizens to report suspicious or unsafe activity as it occurs, and to take ownership in the type of community you want to live in. In addition, we constantly seek new or better ways to deliver a high level of police service to the Town of Amherst. We welcome comments, ideas, and suggestions as to how we may better serve you. Please visit our website at www.AmherstPolice.com to learn more about your police department, and to subscribe to our e-mail police log. It is a good way to stay in touch with what is happening in your community.

The police department wishes to thank the other town departments, particularly Fire, EMS, and DPW, for all their assistance during the year. The teamwork attitude that exists amongst town departments serves the town well. The Department would

also like to express appreciation for the support the community has given for so many years, and looks forward to providing the best possible service at the lowest possible cost over the next year.