



TOWNSEND POLICE DEPARTMENT

70 BROOKLINE STREET • TOWNSEND, MASSACHUSETTS 01469

TEL. 978-597-2242 FAX. 978-597-1718

RICHARD B. BAILEY
CHIEF OF POLICE

April 6, 2018

To Citizens and Visitors of Townsend, MA and Families of the NMRSD:

There has been much debate lately about school safety. Community and school safety are important to me, the department, our schools, and the community.

Since becoming police chief, I have been employing multiple strategies to address community safety. These include greater involvement in the community by having a continual presence at community events such as band concerts and festivals, recreation and sports programs, community reader day, Halloween activities, library events, VFW gatherings, senior activities, church dinners, high visibility traffic patrols, opioid educational events, tenant association meetings, involvement in community groups such as NM Cares, the Police Assisted Addiction Recovery Initiative, and the Northwest Middlesex County Community Outreach Initiative Network to address the opioid issue, the International Association of Chief of Police – One Mind Campaign to address mental health. Through Highway Safety Grants the department has been able to increase traffic enforcement including speeding and impaired driving to help decrease traffic crashes. The department has also participated in other safety initiatives such as bicycle rodeos, car seat check-up events, and the Squannacook Greenways Family Day. I believe in taking a holistic approach to ensuring all of our community members feel safe - which includes a presence in our schools.

In Townsend we have three schools – the regional high school, a middle school, and an elementary school – it is the job of the police department and the community to make each venue feel safe. While we have not had the same person assigned to the schools each day - on a daily basis we are frequently in the schools. This protocol has allowed different department members to become a familiar presence to our school children and staff. There has been some misstatement of facts as well. Some members of the community have been stating that there is a state law related to School Resource Officers that has been broken. There have not been any laws broken nor is there is a mandate from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to have school resource officers assigned to the schools. It is however, the goal of both the Townsend Police and the NMRSD to have an SRO in the schools as soon as possible and as staffing allows.

I am personally in contact with school personnel to include the superintendent, the high school principal, his staff, and personnel at the other schools in town. Given activities at the school are not just limited to when students are in class we strive to have conversations and interactions, not only during the day but also in the evening and on weekends. Members of the department and I have attend many functions at all the



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schools in order to provide a presence and foster relationships. Further, we have Townsend Police Officers addressing crime issues as they occur at the schools as needed. We also can rely on regional resources to assist with our efforts when needed.

Both the Superintendent, her staff, and the police department believe in open dialogue on safety. Collectively - we are doing everything we can to keep our schools – and our community safe.

In addition to our schools, we have several day care centers operating in town along with a vibrant senior center and library, large businesses, community venues, and places of worship. We must balance the safety of all community members with our deployment. Our work to address community violence doesn't end with the schools, in a few weeks I will be working with the library and senior center on strategies and safety plans to keep their staff and visitors safe. Last fall I offered safety training via our Facebook page to any group or business in town.

While high schools are certainly vulnerable, unfortunately, all aspects of a community have been targets of violence. Large mass casualty incidents in our country have occurred in public spaces – concerts, nightclubs, schools, churches, and in the workplace.

Since 1982 there have been 98 mass homicides (shootings). Mass homicides previously have been defined as more than 4 or more deaths by firearms at any location. In 2012 this was changed to 3 or more deaths at any location. Workplace shootings account for 30 of the incidents, various community locations 13, colleges 7, high schools 6, and elementary/middles schools 5.

In terms of the number of victims at various locations, concerts have experienced the highest number of victims with 770, followed by workplaces with 306, colleges 144, high schools 122, and, various community locations 122. The total number of elementary/middle school victims is 105. In any of these situations, one victim is too many.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2015, 2,333 teens in the United States, ages 16–19, were killed and 235,845 were treated in emergency departments for injuries suffered in motor vehicle crashes. That means that six teens ages 16–19 died every day from motor vehicle injuries. The risk of motor vehicle crashes is higher among 16-19-year-olds than among any other age group. In fact, per mile driven, teen drivers ages 16 to 19 are nearly three times more likely than drivers aged 20 and older to be in a fatal crash

Each day across the country, seven children under the age of 18 are killed in shootings and each day 115 people die from drug overdoses.



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My purpose in relating these horrible statistics is to remind us all that we need to educate, protect and care for our children. **One death is one too many!!** While writing this memo, a common phrase continually came to mind “It Takes a Village”. A quick Google search revealed this interpretation,

“It means that a child does not just grow up within a home, where there may be a single parent or a combination of parents, but a child will grow up in a community, a village, and that a child will not grow up just in a home but in a social world with input and understanding from the village. Regardless of the child's upbringing, the child belongs to and is shaped by the community.”

I could not agree more, please remember that our children learn from all of us in Townsend.

As I stated, my goal is to address all safety concerns and make sure everyone feels safe at school, their place of business, out in the community, and in their homes. To do this I will continue to address the multitude of safety issues in our community – On March 17, 2018, on the departments Facebook page I shared the following “School safety is a topic important to all of us. As communities, we must be mindful of ways to recognize those that might be facing challenges in their lives. The more that we, at all ages, **can reach out, be kind, prevent bullying, and promote inclusion in our schools and our communities, the safer we all will be**” this post reached 1,597 people, 25 people “liked” and 9 “shares.” Conversely, a post I made this past week of a brave young community member deservingly had 10,906 “reaches”, 927 people “liked” and 39 “shares”. I would be thrilled to see that many people help us send the message for peaceful communities.

I need all community members to be aware of their surroundings, if you see something – say something. Look out for your neighbors, engage in community activities, engage others, and reach out to us as needed. Do not feel that you are bothering us; the department is there for you 24/7.

While we are short staffed at this time -- this is not unique to Townsend – it is a national problem in the policing profession. The complexity of policing has increased, and unfortunately, interest in the profession has decreased.

As a small community, we have the additional problem of having limited opportunities for attaining rank and do not have specialized teams as many large communities do and that can make it harder to fill positions.

Earlier this year we were in the process of considering a candidate who opted to go to another community closer to their hometown which set back the hiring process. During this time, we had another officer move on to a different community. To further complicate



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staffing, when I was hired as chief, there was an officer out injured and there has been one out on injury leave ever since. All of these events impact our staffing. We have been able to maintain coverage and our officers are working hard to respond to the needs of the community.

To address our staffing needs, we recently facilitated a large recruiting and testing process which we are hopeful will yield a candidate. Unfortunately, by the time we advertise, recruit select, background check, and train a candidate it can take up to a year before the person is ready to be put into the deployment rotation which impacts how we staff each shift.

Despite these challenges, Townsend is a safe place, and with the help of the community, we will continue to be safe in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard B. Bailey".

Richard B. Bailey

Chief of Police

Attachment: Data on Mass Homicides



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| Mass Homicides - Occurrences by Location – 1982-2018 | | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Location | Total victims | Total Injured | Total Fatalities | Occurrences by Location |
| Workplace | 306 | 120 | 186 | 30 |
| Community | 122 | 41 | 81 | 13 |
| School - College | 144 | 73 | 71 | 7 |
| School - High School | 132 | 79 | 53 | 6 |
| School - Elementary/Middle | 105 | 56 | 49 | 5 |
| Military Installations | 113 | 75 | 38 | 5 |
| Store - Mall | 51 | 22 | 29 | 5 |
| Restaurant | 116 | 55 | 61 | 5 |
| Religious | 46 | 35 | 57 | 5 |
| Government | 38 | 17 | 21 | 4 |
| Apartment | 19 | 1 | 18 | 3 |
| Police Homicide (non-call related) | 27 | 15 | 12 | 3 |
| Concert | 770 | 707 | 63 | 2 |
| Nightclub | 109 | 54 | 55 | 2 |
| Airport | 11 | 6 | 5 | 1 |
| Nursing Home | 11 | 3 | 8 | 1 |
| Theater | 82 | 70 | 12 | 1 |
| Total | 2,202 | 1,429 | 819 | 98 |

Data is from Mother Jones.