

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Last of four columns

The last decades of the 20th century saw significant changes in, and challenges to, policing in Fairport. The many social changes and especially growing drug use continue to be challenging for law enforcement. As has always been the case, law and order outside the village of Fairport are maintained by the Monroe County Sheriff's Department, while the village is covered by the local Fairport Police Department.

Succeeding Thomas Aldrich and Jack Faucher, who served as village police chiefs from the 1960's up to 1975, Joseph Picciotti made major changes in the department. His stated goal was to make the police force more visible and more professional. Soon after becoming chief, he said, "we had to get hold of a community that was wild... There were rowdy taverns and fights in the streets." There was also a drug problem. Picciotti introduced a training program, streamlined procedures, and generally brought the department up to date. He also was responsible for starting the DARE program in the Fairport schools. His changes proved successful as the number of burglaries decreased and the number solved increased. In 1982, also during his tenure, the department offices were moved to the former fire department facilities adjacent to the Municipal Building and the department was staffed by seven full time officers. In 1987, due to budget issues, the village proposed that the third shift of the department be eliminated and replaced by the Monroe County Sheriff's department. The change was approved to the dismay of Chief Picciotti who felt that the loss of the third shift would mean loss of continuity in the department and would inevitably lead to its demise. In fact the department did decline to a total of six officers in addition to the chief after the shift was eliminated.

Many village residents missed the third shift and by August 1989, after some reports of an increase in crime, the Citizens Organizing for Police Services (COPS) was formed under the leadership of Debra Tandoi. And in April, 1990, after continuing pressure from COPS and an easing of budgetary constraints, the village leadership voted to reinstate the third shift. Chief Picciotti noted that from a personal point of view this was not good news, (meaning that he would have readjust to his police radio being on 24 hours a day), but professionally he was elated, stating that it "will make this village a better place."

Brian Page became chief in 1991 and saw drugs as the root cause of most of the area's crime. Vowing to make the local officers more visible, he introduced foot patrols and made the department office more accessible to the public. The new style appeared to work, as crime dropped 20% during his first year. The department also began work to obtain state accreditation, a three-year process that was successfully completed in 1996, making Fairport one of only 60 departments out of 500 in the state to receive accreditation. His commitment was not only to professional policing, but also to community policing, creating a visible presence in and positive interaction with the citizens of Fairport. All his officers were expected to spend at least one hour of their eight-hour shift on foot. The department also instituted a part-time bike patrol, which continues to be quite popular and consequently effective.

Brian Page retired in 2002 and was succeeded by Kirk Parsons, former night sergeant in the department. Parsons held the post until 2008. During his tenure, the department became part of the Greater Rochester Area Narcotics Enforcement Team, a county-wide group, and also became a community service site.

In 2008, Maureen Chisholm was named chief. In her several years as chief, she has seen the creation of a "Senior Academy," which familiarizes seniors with the workings of the

department and also includes safety issues and scam awareness, and has instituted a place for the safe disposal of prescription drugs, which are seen to be the source of abuse among teens. While continuing to deal with the minor crimes and drug issues inherent in any community, her goal has been to continue the philosophy of community policing, create a partnership with the community, and enhance communication with all.



Chief Charles Kenney and Office Joseph Santillo with two new Ford police cars (1951)