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Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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Brattleboro Police Chief to step down March 30

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Evans, currently assistant chief, will take the reins from
retiring Chief Norma Hardy

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TEXT BODY:

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Police Chief Norma Hardy, who previously served 26
years with the Port Authority Police Department of New York and
New Jersey, is retiring.

Saying he spoke “with a heavy heart,” Town Manager
John Potter announced Hardy’s March 30 retirement at the Jan.
22 Selectboard meeting.

11 "I've been working really hard to postpone this day as
12 long as possible, but I know from extensive conversations with
13 the chief that now is the best time for the next chapter in her life,
14 and I thank her and wish her the all best," Potter said.

15 Potter said since Hardy arrived here in July 2021, the
16 town has "seen a transformation in the police department that
17 has rippled out throughout town government and the
18 community."

19 He noted the chief's "leadership and compassion" as
20 leading to innovative policing strategies like the BRAT
21 (Brattleboro Resource Assistance Team) unit, the community
22 resource officer, and a fully staffed police program through
23 Health Care and Rehabilitation Services, a Springfield-based
24 provider of mental health care.

25 When Hardy arrived, she believed her distinct
26 background as a Black woman with extensive law enforcement
27 experience would be an invaluable part of that conversation, she
28 said.

29 "I felt I could help change people's minds about policing,
30 particularly on a local level, by demonstrating all the things that a
31 police department could offer," Hardy said in a news release
32 from the town announcing her retirement.

33 Current Assistant Chief Jeremy Evans will take Hardy's
34 post as the town's 25th police chief. Captain Adam Petlock will
35 be promoted to assistant chief.

36 Evans has served here for 27 years and "been a key
37 support to Chief Hardy," said Potter. He called Petlock an
38 "invaluable member" of the police force for 15 years.

39 Potter noted that Hardy's leadership with her team has
40 been "excellent" and said, "They work together [and] support
41 each other and everyone in the community."

42 "I want to say how much we're going to miss Chief
43 Hardy, how much we appreciate her work, and how much I feel
44 the strength she brought to this department will carry on that
45 work," Potter said.

Selectboard Vice Chair Oscar Heller echoed Potter's thought. "Chief Hardy transformed the department and the town owes her a great debt. . .and we'll all be very sorry to not have her at the helm," he said, adding he's also had "outstanding experiences" working with Evans and Petlock.

"I'd like to say thank you — not just to my department, but to the members of the community who gave me a chance," said Hardy.

Community policing in action

Hardy previously retired as chief of the Port Authority Police Department, which oversees all New York and New Jersey transportation services, including bridges, tunnels, and airports, including the World Trade Center. There, she had 500 officers under her command.

In her 26 years there, she came up through the ranks as a patrol officer who "survived the first bombing of the World Trade Center [in 1993], and then I just worked my way up from there," she told *The Commons* in 2021.

Hardy stepped out of retirement to serve here "during the critical period when communities across the nation were examining ways to reform policing following the death of George Floyd," the news release observed.

She had previously served 26 years with the Port Authority Police Department of New York and New Jersey. After a few years on the job here amid rising concerns about downtown safety, Hardy developed the Downtown Safety Action Plan, which was approved by the Selectboard in 2024.

The plan added three officers to the force, paved the way for a substation in the Transportation Center, and formalized BRAT, a specialized unit of unarmed officers focused on de-escalation and connecting the public with social services.

During a recent Selectboard meeting, the police department presented an update regarding BRAT's first year, noting that in addition to providing a regular presence downtown

through foot patrols, the unit has responded to more than 530 incidents.

Hardy said she's heard from store owners that the program has been a "positive step in the right direction," as evidenced by a busy holiday shopping season.

"When I went downtown, especially with the Festival of Miniatures going on, it was great to see that the streets were full of people," she said.

Potter said the Downtown Safety Action Plan, along with initiatives like One Brattleboro, a cross-sector collaboration among local government and other agencies in town, has not only enhanced public safety but also connected vulnerable populations with needed services.

"Chief Hardy's guiding star has been her compassion," said Potter. "It's evident through the development of the BRAT unit, in the many excellent officers that she's attracted to the department, and by the way she prioritizes listening to members of the community. Brattleboro benefited from both the wealth of knowledge she brought from her decades of experience, and from her thoughtful and careful approach to decision-making."

As the police department heads into this new leadership transition, Hardy described both Evans and Petlock as leaders with a deep commitment to the people of Brattleboro and the principles of community policing.

New leadership

Evans, who holds a master's degree in criminal justice, joined the department as a police officer in 1998. He rose through the ranks to become assistant chief in 2023. He has been an active participant in the One Brattleboro initiative since its inception and currently serves as board president for the Windham County Safe Place Child Advocacy Center and is a member of the Vermont Criminal Justice Council's subcommittee on fair and impartial policing.

113 "I am honored to become the 25th Police Chief for the
114 town of Brattleboro," said Evans. "Over the past 27 years, my
115 focus has been to build partnerships, which has resulted in many
116 innovative programs."

117 Under Hardy's leadership, said Evans, the department
118 has reoriented itself to more effectively face public safety
119 challenges.

120 Petlock, who joined the department in 2009 and was
121 promoted to captain in 2024, has been an integral part of the
122 department's outreach team and played a key role in
123 implementing Project CARE (Community Approach to Recovery
124 and Engagement), a partnership among the department and social
125 service agencies formed in response to the opioid crisis.

126 He has also been a driving force behind the Situation
127 Table, a collaborative community model where social services,
128 law enforcement, and health partners meet weekly to identify
129 and collectively help people reduce their acutely elevated risk.

130 Hardy expressed her gratitude to the Brattleboro
131 community, the administration in town government, other town
132 departments, and to the staff at the Brattleboro Police
133 Department, who she said embodies the mission of the
134 department by holding themselves to the highest standards of
135 service and conduct.

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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