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**HEADLINE ELEMENTS:**

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1 Brattleboro Police Chief to step down March 30

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2 Evans, currently assistant chief, will take the reins from

3 retiring Chief Norma Hardy

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4 TEXT BODY:

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

8 Saying he spoke "with a heavy heart," Town Manager  
9 John Potter announced Hardy's March 30 retirement at the Jan.  
10 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.

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

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

## 54 **Community policing in action**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 104 **New leadership**

105 Evans, who holds a master's degree in criminal justice,  
106 joined the department as a police officer in 1998. He rose  
107 through the ranks to become assistant chief in 2023. He has been  
108 an active participant in the One Brattleboro initiative since its  
109 inception and currently serves as board president for the  
110 Windham County Safe Place Child Advocacy Center and is a  
111 member of the Vermont Criminal Justice Council's subcommittee  
112 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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