

2016 Becoming a Big Year of Changes at Darien Police Department

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Tagged as : [Darien Police Department 2016](#), [Darien Police Department Personnel](#)

Date : August 22, 2016



New police officers are adding a "Class of 2016" to the Darien Police Department, which just saw the departure of another police officer, another come off of probation after a year with the department and recent promotions after some senior officials retired.

The department is also getting a new police dog and expects to have a new police boat in service this year.

Many of those changes were reviewed at a recent meeting of the three-member Darien Police Commission, which has to approve most of the changes.

In, Out

Police Officer Kathy Conlin, the second female officer hired in the department, has resigned from the force and will work as a constable for the Tokeneke Association, which hires former Darien officers to patrol its private roads.

"Kathy was a really popular member of this department," Chief Duane Lovello told the commission. "A hard worker, she always had a smile on her face, never complained."

Tokeneke constables are often at the Police Department Headquarters, Lovello said, "so she'll still be walking the halls here on occasion." The commission approved her resignation retroactively, as of Aug. 6.

Police Officer Luis Moura, hired about a year ago, has passed through his one-year probation period with flying colors, Lovello said.

The department has had "nothing but favorable reviews on his performance," Lovello said. "He's just as enthusiastic as the day you interviewed him [for the job]. You see the letters coming in from citizens regarding the good work he does in the field.

"He's really proven to be a valuable member of the team. He's always out and about, engaging with the public. I see him on the fields around town, talking with the kids as they play sports and stuff. [...] He's exactly what we were hoping for when we hired him."

Personnel Shuffles

Recent resignations and retirements from the force, especially at the top, have already led to [several promotions in the higher ranks](#) last month, with Raymond Osborne promoted to captain and commander of the field services division, which covers most of the department's activities and the lion's share of its police officers.

Former sergeants Robert Shreders and Thomas "TJ" Whyte were promoted to lieutenants, and detectives Saverio "Sam" Boccuzzi and Andrew Mastroianni were promoted to sergeant.

A promotion ceremony is scheduled for Aug. 29 at the Darien Community Association, Lovello said. "We don't normally see five promotions at one time," he said.

The department is in the process of hiring five police officers to fill vacancies, with some candidates already-certified and working as police officers in other area departments. Darien could have as many as five new officers at the police academy in Milford at its next session, but "whether we need all five is dependent on whether we take on any already certified officers," Lovello said. "We're seeing some high quality candidates."

Commission Chairman J. Paul Johnson agreed. "The quality of the applicants is really quite extraordinary, and the depth of talent that has come forward, so we're quite happy. I think the town is going to be very pleased in the long-run with the new officers."

Other Changes

People are not the only changes the department is seeing: Police dog Zulu is expected to retire by the end of this year, and a Labrador Retriever [may replace](#) the German Shepherd. The department may even acquire a second police dog, Lovello said.

A bigger change for the department may come as body cameras become standard equipment for police officers. The Board of Selectmen has already [approved purchasing](#) the cameras and services to handle the significant amount of video recordings they'll generate. The Board of Finance and Representative Town

Meeting must also approve the purchase before it the department can proceed later this year.

Darien is eligible for a state grant for the entire first-year cost of the program, Lovello said. The grant has some conditions, and the department is still researching whether or not it can comply with the state rules, he said.

The department is also in the process of acquiring a new police boat, and that may happen a bit quicker than had been expected, the police chief said.

"The new boat is in production," Lovello said. "It's well ahead of schedule. We initially thought we weren't going to see the boat until the end of the year," he said, but it looks like the vessel could be delivered well before that.

"It's undergoing sea trials the first week of September," he said. "They anticipate us having it either very late in September or very early in October." Two Darien police officers from the department's Marine Division will travel to Bremerton, Wash., where the factory is located, to participate in the sea trials, he said. If the boat passes the trials, it will be trucked to Darien.