

Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw
January 11, 2013

If you are an Amesbury resident, you may have noticed an addition to this year's City Census packet. The State Accreditation of Amesbury Police Department will be reviewed again in 2013 and as part of the process; we are looking for your input. The MA Police Accreditation Commission looks over policies, procedures, training, programs and various aspects of Police Agencies. Once a department achieves accreditation, the Commission reviews the status every three years. The Amesbury Police Department was one of the first departments in Massachusetts to receive Accreditation in 2001.

The brief, one page (two-sided) survey is broken down into 5 Sections and should only take only a couple moments to complete. Residents are asked to complete the survey as best as they can as we realize some people may not have needed police services or may not be aware of crime data. This survey is designed to measure what the community expects of the police department as well as the perception of issues affecting the city and society. Once collected, the information will help us direct services to better serve and protect our City, so your contribution is important. The survey can be returned anonymously to either the City Clerk's Office or Police Department when completed as collection boxes will be set up at each site.

Section 1 of the survey asks responders about their perception of crime and activity in the City. Again, we are asking you respond as best as you can, realizing that you may not be aware of actual data. The fear of crime is almost as bad as the actual incidents, hence why crime prevention efforts are widely used. It's important for police agencies to provide information about crimes to eliminate myths and rumors about incidents. In many cases, the release of information must be done carefully, so not to jeopardize an investigation or tarnish personal privacy. Some of the issues and crimes to be evaluated in section 1 include burglary, drunk driving, vandalism and traffic concerns.

Section 2 deals with the efforts of the department to provide community outreach, such as this weekly column. In your opinion, please indicate your level of support for the existing or potential programs. We would like to know what residents feel is important in terms of community outreach. Section 3 asks for your overall impression of police operations, services, training, behavior and even the accreditation process. Once again, we ask for your best estimate but you may also choose, "not applicable" if you do not know or have not utilized a particular service.

The survey concludes with space (section 4) to provide additional comments you feel are useful or applicable. In fact, previous responses have helped to bring back services such as the bike patrols and domestic victim liaison. In closing, you are asked if you feel safe living in Amesbury and why. As I mentioned earlier, the fear of crime can be equally as troublesome as the actual incidents. As a police department, we want residents to feel safe in their homes, so if they don't, we need to resolve the reasons why.

As Crime Prevention Officer, the task of drafting the survey became my assignment, so please contact me if you have any questions; e-mail at thomash@amesburyma.gov or call 978-

388-1217. I would like to thank Bonnie and the staff at the City Clerk's Office for their help distributing the survey to Amesbury residents. Completing your census is one of the most important roles you have as a resident. Honestly, I believe the "official" number of residents listed each year is far below the actual number of people living in our City. This discrepancy leads to lower State and Federal funding, missed grant opportunities and even less representation, which costs us all. Finally, I would like to say a very special "thank you" to our intern, Kyle Roy, for making the 7000 copies, which are being distributed to Amesbury households. The 2013 survey is a great example of community policing; with several partners working to make the effort possible. Please return completed surveys as soon as possible to help us make Amesbury a safer and better community.

In closing this week, I would like to announce that the Amesbury Police Department is now on "facebook." If you are a facebook follower, be sure to check out our page and "like" it. The Department hopes to begin using social media to advertise programs, detail services, provide information about community events and distribute information about certain incidents. Several departments have begun using the feature to promote community policing as well as solve crimes. Watch for us on "Twitter" too.