

# Malden ADVOCATE

Vol. 20, No. 14

-FREE-

www.advocateneews.net

Published Every Friday

617-387-2200

Friday, April 7, 2017

## Crime stats show a safer, stronger city

By Barbara Taormina

The latest round of statistics from the Malden Police Department show the city continues to make significant strides in public safety. Police Chief Kevin Molis presented an overview of crime and policing in Malden to the City's Council's Public Safety Committee this week, and the news was all good. During 2016, the city saw a significant decrease in calls to police, arrests and crimes of all major types.

The number of arrests fell 32 percent, from 1,066 in 2015 to 717 last year. The 34,132 calls to the police for service dropped to 27,801 during the same period. And the city's eight wards saw decreases in the number of robberies, assaults, burglaries and motor vehicle thefts and break-ins.

"It's all clearly good trends," said Molis, who added that the department's ongoing and pro-

active police patrols of the city's hot spots have contributed to the decrease in crime. Police regularly visit city parks, cemeteries, school grounds, 24-hour stores and other sites where crime has been a problem. Molis himself has become a familiar face at the Malden Center MBTA station during the evening rush hour.

Although the numbers are heading in the right direction, Molis said they don't tell the whole story. "Statistics are good to look at but they don't give you an absolute landscape," he said, adding that there's a difference between a robbery that might take place during a drug deal and a robbery of an older woman.

Molis offered some context to the number of motor vehicle thefts in Ward 5, which jumped from 8 to 17 last year. "Of those thefts, six were vehicles taken by family or friends without permission," he said. "Another two were in vehicles that had been left run-

ning with the keys in the ignition."

While crime is down, Molis acknowledged that the city still has challenges. Domestic violence has been a priority for the Police Department, which partners with RESPOND, a Somerville-based agency that provides support and services to victims.

Last year, the Malden police logged 499 responses to incidents of domestic violence, 20 percent of which involved school-aged victims under 25. Working together with RESPOND, police helped 92 people obtain emergency restraining orders and provided victims 631 nights of safety in shelters. "The numbers are an indication of the volume of the problem," said Molis.

Opioid addiction and drug-related crimes also continue to be problems for the city although fatal overdoses did drop from 11 in 2015 to eight last year.

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Molis highlighted Malden's support for the police and added that cooperation and collaboration with city leaders and residents have helped make the community safer.

"I think we all remember when crime scene tape was not an unusual sight," he said. "Five years ago, we were all getting calls from people who were moving out of the city because of the crime."

Public Safety Committee Chairman and Ward 6 Council-

lor Neil Kinnon praised police for the turnaround and added that his Ward 6 neighborhood, which once had the highest crime rate in Malden, is now one of the safest places in the city.

Ward 5 Councillor Barbara Murphy said the community has appreciated the emphasis police have put on accessibility and outreach. "The robocalls for break-ins was very proactive and very well-received," she said.

Looking ahead, Molis said, he would like to devote more time to traffic enforcement and en-

suring that roads are safe for drivers and pedestrians. He also said a youth services officer would be a valuable addition to the department. "It's a great way to impact lives early on," he said.

Molis said the police are continually looking for ways to meet the evolving needs of the community. "We change things up, there are layers of service beyond just responding to calls," he said. "We are doing everything we can, and we hope to do more."