

Belmont Police Stretch Legs In New Station

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BELMONT -- A recent training session for members of the police department found all members together in one room at the police station, a first for the department, which recently moved from its cramped space in the town hall into a former fire station.

"Before this we had to use space in other town buildings for a training session for all department members," says Police Chief Michael McCarty, who says police officers are enthused and happy about their new surroundings. And with good reason. The new station has more than twice the space of the former quarters (2,500 square feet, compared with 1,100 square feet) and has separate areas for all of the police department functions, from interrogation to evidence storage. It also has locker rooms for both men and women and a lunch room/meeting room, a booking room next to the squad room, even an armory.

"People don't have to eat lunch at their desks or wait to do their paperwork because the desks are being used by another officer," says McCarty, noting the squad room now has three desks with computer terminals. The only person who ended up with less space was the chief himself, who says he also misses having a window in his office. But he says that is a small price to pay for the improved efficiency of the new surroundings and the effect it has had on the department's morale.

"People look forward to coming to work in a building which helps them realize that they are professionals, where they don't have to apologize for the surroundings. It makes them feel proud and gives them a better feeling for their work," says McCarty. He said the renovated Fuller Street building, which became available earlier this year when the **Belmont** Fire Department moved into a new station which had been built through a community-wide volunteer effort, looks "friendly, not like a fortress" yet provides good security for the department. Entryway is into a lobby where access to the rest of the building is monitored by an electronically controlled security door. The lobby area has a restroom on one side and a small private conference room on the other, with a computer terminal.

Across from the chief's office there is a separate detective's office providing a private, closed-off area, and the new evidence room provides three times as much storage space as the department had in the old office. The administrative area where the secretary/receptionist works has two computer work stations as well as other office equipment, and a storage room off that area has allowed the department to bring all of its files, some of which had been stored on the upper level of the town hall, together for the first time in years.

McCarty said he hopes to have an enclosed vehicle entrance completed at the rear of the building, which will allow the department to bring suspects into the booking area without passing through any other part of the building. The renovation project, which voters approved at the last town meeting, will cost about \$115,000 said McCarty, noting some changes in the original plans were approved by selectmen and the budget committee.

McCarty says Officer Rich Bryant has built shelves in some of the rooms to increase the storage capacity and that some things, including an outside telephone that will allow people to seek help when the building isn't manned, have still to be completed.