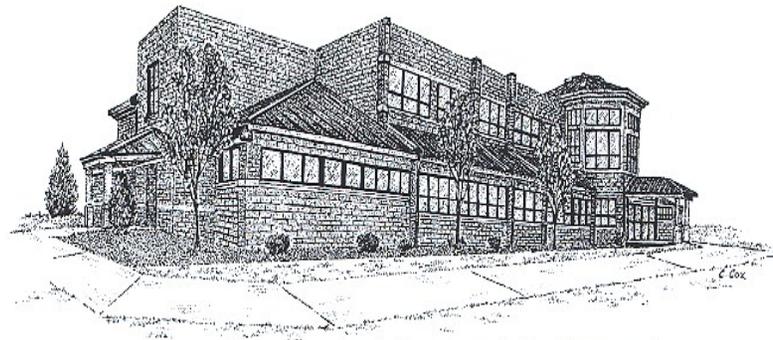




South Kingstown Police Department



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The South Kingstown Police Department was formed in November, 1927 with the appointment of the town's first police officer, Walter L. McNulty. In April of 1928, with the addition of Officer Peter J. Costanza, the department doubled in size and began serving South Kingstown's 6,085 citizens.

In 1931, Officer McNulty was appointed Chief and commanded patrols from a one-room basement headquarters in the rear of Clark's store below the present location of Phil's Diner on Main Street. During WW II, the rapidly growing department, with a complement of eight full time officers, moved to new quarters on Main Street, the current location of Universal Firearms.

The following decades brought tremendous growth within both the town and the department. In 1956, Chief McNulty was succeeded by Lieutenant Joseph B. Congdon, a former FBI Special Agent. By 1964, the growing department moved to a new facility located at 509 Commodore Perry Highway (Route 1), presently the Town of South Kingstown Public Services building. By then, the department had seventeen full time officers, three civilian employees and a reserve force of twenty five officers. The population of the town had grown to 14,000.

Captain Clinton E. Salisbury succeeded Chief Congdon in 1968. During the early 1970's, rapid growth continued, and a second story was added to the public safety building on Route 1. This addition allowed for expansion of the Detective Division, and also provided space for a large multi-use public meeting room and a second garage bay to accommodate the increasing fleet of police vehicles.

In 1981, retired Rhode Island State Police Lieutenant Vincent Vespia, noted for his work investigating organized crime, succeeded Chief Salisbury. The ensuing decades brought continued growth and diversity to the department. In 1989, the department's Harbor Patrol was restructured to include patrols of Pt. Judith Pond, Narrow River and the town's other fresh water lakes and ponds. A Ceremonial Honor Guard Unit was also formed to represent the department and town in parades, formal functions and funerals. The Ceremonial Honor Guard Unit has proudly represented the department at the National Law Enforcement Officer's Memorial Ceremony in Washington, D.C. in every year since its inception.

By the mid 1990's, the continued addition of police officers caused the department to outgrow the limited space within the former public safety building. Voters approved a bond to fund the construction of a new Public Safety Complex, and ground was broken in March of 1997. The present facility, located at 1790 Kingstown Road, encompasses seven acres at the intersection of Kingstown Road and Curtis Corner Road. The Public Safety Complex, which consists of 28,000 square feet, including an emergency dispatch center and prisoner processing and holding facilities, was built at a cost of 5.9 million dollars and opened in May of 1998. The Police Department, Emergency Medical Services Department, and the Animal Control Unit operate out of this facility.

As of July 2016, the Police Department consists of fifty-three sworn officers, eight civilian dispatchers, and a civilian administrative staff of ten employees. Chief Vespia continues to lead the department which serves a diverse seaside community of 30,000 citizens and encompasses 63 square miles including the University of Rhode Island.

Consistent with the department's Mission Philosophy, all department members recognize that in addition to maintaining public order, they serve as total service providers. The department's effectiveness is directly attributed to public trust and the support of the citizens of South Kingstown.



The patch worn by South Kingstown Police Officers was designed in 1951. At its center is an arrowhead, the heart of the town seal, honoring the heritage of the area's original residents, the Narragansett Indian Tribe. In 1657, negotiations for the Pettaquamscutt Purchase opened South Kingstown and other portions of Washington County to European settlement. That same year, the village of Wakefield was established. In 1674, Wakefield and surrounding villages were incorporated into the new town of Kings Towne, joining South Kingstown with Charlestown, North Kingstown and Narragansett. In 1723, the towns of North Kingstown and Charlestown were separately incorporated as was South Kingstown though still adjoined to Narragansett which did not separate as an independently incorporated town until 1882.