



TOWN OF HARTFORD
POLICE DEPARTMENT
&
Emergency Communications Center
Chief Connie Kelley



Serving the Villages of Hartford * West Hartford * White River Junction * Wilder * Quechee

March 25, 2025

To: Members of the Vermont General Assembly
From: Chief Connie Kelley

Dear members of the General Assembly,

I am writing to support funding for the position of Head Canine Trainer at the Vermont Police Academy. We currently have two K9 teams within our department who are extremely valuable when it comes to assisting in criminal investigations as well as public relations. Our canine teams have apprehended violent fleeing felons, recovered explosives, illegal firearms and large amounts of illicit controlled substances. Aside from these, our teams are ambassadors to the public, bridging the gap between law enforcement and citizens. To obtain great success stories like these, there needs to be foundation built for the teams to go from.

To maintain the highest standards of training and operational readiness, it is crucial to have an experienced and dedicated professional overseeing the development and instruction of both the canines and their handlers.

Currently, the Vermont Police Academy lacks a full-time Head Canine Trainer, which limits the academy's ability to effectively train and certify K9 teams. A properly funded position would ensure that officers receive the highest level of instruction, ultimately enhancing public safety and law enforcement effectiveness across the state. The academy currently contracts with Richard Slusser for K9 training and the program has seen an overhaul under his leadership. He has brought professional standards to the program and up to date training methods. The results of his efforts and training can be seen with the work product of the canine teams in the field.

By investing in this role, the General Assembly would be supporting not only law enforcement officers but also the communities they serve. Well-trained K9 units help solve crimes more efficiently, locate missing persons, and enhance overall police response capabilities. I urge you to consider allocating the necessary funding to establish this position and strengthen our state's commitment to public safety. I appreciate your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,