

# Newly retired Shrewsbury police chief reflects on long career

By [Melanie Petrucci](#) - July 27, 2020

Shrewsbury – Recently retired Police Chief James (Jay) Hester’s last day with the Shrewsbury Police Department was June 30, ending a 33-year-career spent entirely in Shrewsbury.

Detective Lieutenant Kevin Anderson, who has been serving as interim Chief of Police since Hester retired, was formally named as his successor at the Board of Selectmen’s July 14 meeting.

Hester, a Shrewsbury native, recently discussed his tenure with the department, which included 14 as chief, in an informal Q&A.

## ***Please share a little bit about your background:***

“I was born and raised in Shrewsbury, I went through the Shrewsbury school system and I received an associate degree in law enforcement from Quinsigamond Community College, and Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from Anna Maria College.”

## ***What prompted your career choice in law enforcement?***

“I have family members who were police officers including my grandfather and my uncle who were both an influence in my decision of a career in law enforcement.”

## ***How has the Police Department kept pace with the growth of the town?***

“During my tenure as chief the town has been supportive with incremental staffing growth of the police department and that needs to continue to keep in step with the ongoing development and growth of the town. The area that is being addressed now is the replacement of the current police station which has been outgrown...I believe it is crucial to make the investment in a new police facility.”

## ***What role have you played in the new proposed Muni-Police Campus?***

"I have been involved with other members of our command staff with determining current and future needs of the police department's facility and providing input for the architects on conceptual designs for the proposed station during the feasibility study."

***What are the biggest changes you've seen since you've been chief?***

"The job has become more professionalized with a better trained and educated workforce; the equipment is better, and the technology that is part of the job now allows officers to operate more efficiently."

***What are you most proud of?***

"I am proud of the professionalism and courteousness that our officers and civilian staff exhibit during their interactions with the public; we receive a lot of compliments from the community as a result of these positive contacts."

***What have been your biggest success stories?***

"The biggest success stories have been the ones that don't get much attention, when people reach out, sometimes long after the interaction and tell you that something we did or facilitated put them on the right track and changed their lives for the better."

***What are some challenges you see in the future?***

"Police work has become more complex. Issues such as mental illness, the opioid epidemic, terrorism, internet crime, and the scrutiny that social media has created are challenges that will continue into the future."

***What advice would you give to your successor?***

"Know that it can be a difficult job, be prepared for ups and downs and don't take things personally when the conflicts arise."

"We are fortunate to have such a dedicated group of men and woman both sworn and civilian employees that make up the SPD and it is through their hard work and daily efforts we are able to deliver high quality police service to the community," he added.

"It's been an honor and a privilege to have served the town of Shrewsbury as a police officer since 1987...I am proud to be a member of a department made up of such a dedicated and professional group of people."