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Mayor

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MAYOR STRATTON SWEARS-IN 10 NEW POLICE OFFICERS

New Recruits Enter Police Academy, Bring Schenectady P.D. to 160 Officers

More Cops on the Street is Part of City's Ongoing Effort to Improve Public Safety

SCHENECTADY – Mayor Brian U. Stratton today announced the hiring of 10 new police officers and administered the oath of office to the group during a ceremony at City Hall. The new recruits will immediately begin an extensive, six-month training program at the Zone 5 Police Academy in Schenectady, and are expected to be ready for regular patrol deployment in the Schenectady Police Department by March of 2008.

“As part of our continued efforts to strengthen and improve police department operations, and to make the needed investments in public safety throughout our city, I am proud to welcome these new officers to the ranks of the Schenectady Police Department,” Mayor Stratton said.

Mayor Stratton was joined at the ceremony by Public Safety Commissioner Wayne Bennett, Chief of Police Michael N. Geraci, District Attorney Bob Carney, Schenectady County Legislator and Vice Chair Ed Kosiur, and City Council Public Safety Chairman Gary McCarthy.

Commissioner Bennett said the 10 officers, who collectively represent Schenectady's largest incoming class of police recruits in nearly six years, will fill two-thirds of current vacancies within the department with the most qualified and promising cadets.

“From more than 253 who passed the police civil service examination given in December of 2006, and the 79 individuals who scored 85 or higher, we have carefully selected those who we believe are the most qualified and best prepared to join the Schenectady Police Department,” Commissioner Bennett said. “Throughout the coming months, we will continue to diligently search for and recruit additional officer candidates and lateral transfers from other police agencies in order to bring Schenectady to fully staffed strength of 166 officers in 2008,” Bennett added.

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Police Chief Geraci said when the 10 recruits have successfully completed the six-month police academy training program, they will then be required to complete an additional 12-week field training regiment before being assigned to regular patrol duty within the Police Department.

The new officers are:

- **Daniel Bean**, 29, of Rotterdam. Bean is currently attending Hudson Valley Community College and was previously employed by the Town of Niskayuna Water Department.
- **Matthew Dearing**, 24, of Schenectady. Dearing is a 2006 graduate of SUNY-Oneonta and was previously employed as a station manager with the Hertz Corporation.
- **Bret Ferris**, 23, of Albany. Ferris graduated from SUNY-Albany in May and had been employed previously as a landscaper.
- **Richard Insogna**, 22, of Amsterdam. Insogna is a 2006 graduate of Union College and had been employed as a substitute teacher for the Amsterdam City School District.
- **Adriel Linyear**, 28, of Schenectady. Linyear is a 2002 graduate of Lafayette College in Easton, Penn., and previously worked as an insurance adjuster.
- **Ryan Macherone**, 29, of Scotia. Macherone is a 2001 graduate of SUNY-Oneonta and was a salesman.
- **Christopher North**, 28, of Glenville. North attended Adirondack Community College in Queensbury and was employed previously as an Emergency Medical Technician with Mohawk Ambulance in Schenectady.
- **Matthew Overocker**, 22, of Latham. Overocker graduated from SUNY-Albany in May and had been previously employed at the Watervliet Arsenal.
- **Michael Popolizio**, 29, of Schenectady. Popolizio is a 2005 graduate of SUNY-Albany and was previously managing a local sporting goods store.
- **Bryan Rasmussen**, 22, of East Greenbush. Rasmussen is a 2003 graduate of Hudson Valley Community College and worked previously as a customer service coordinator for a local furniture company.

Mayor Stratton said the newly hired police officers add to a range of other measures undertaken during his administration to strengthen public safety operations in Schenectady. These efforts include significant State and other grant funding for the presence of uniformed State Troopers, the Schenectady County Sheriff and other law enforcement officials working side-by-side with Schenectady Police officers in targeted neighborhoods throughout the city.

Schenectady Leveraging State Funds for Crime-Fighting

Since 2004, Mayor Stratton and the City Council have worked with the Schenectady County District Attorney to secure more than \$704,000 in funding from the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services and the State's Operation IMPACT program. IMPACT provides funding for State Troopers and other law enforcement personnel to work with the Schenectady Police Department in patrolling neighborhoods, conducting criminal and other drug-related investigations.

In addition, Mayor Stratton said IMPACT grants are also being used to fund the installation of up to 40 surveillance cameras in targeted neighborhoods to deter, investigate and fight crime. Schenectady's innovative camera project is gaining prominence and praise for its effectiveness from law enforcement officials.

"The City of Schenectady is at the leading edge of crime-fighting in New York State through the implementation of the surveillance camera project. Our camera project, a model program for crime prevention and law enforcement, and has proven so effective that we are receiving record funding for its continuation," Stratton said.

District Attorney Bob Carney says cameras installed just three years ago in the city's Hamilton Hill neighborhood have had a dramatic impact on crime activity, citing a more than 270 percent drop in the calls for service at the corner of Emmett and Stanley Streets, a location long notorious for alleged drug and other reported criminal activity.

Mayor Stratton said cameras are either now up and working or are planned for the Mount Pleasant, downtown, Union College, Central State Street and Eastern Avenue sections of the city, with the potential of adding more cameras over time. The cameras are monitored by the Police Department in conjunction with the District Attorney's office.

Stratton said IMPACT dollars are also being used to support the addition of uniformed State Police Troopers on several nights of the week, who walk and ride with Schenectady police officers. "Our highly effective blue and grey patrols have become a standard of excellence for crime fighting in Schenectady," Stratton said.

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Mayor Stratton cited statistics just released by the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services, which administers funding for the IMPACT program. Those statistics show Schenectady, one of 17 Operation IMPACT communities designated in New York State, experienced the second largest percentage drop in reported crime thus far in 2007.

“Our streets are safer thanks to our partnership with New York, Operation IMPACT and other programs. According to DCJS, crime in Schenectady has dropped by 19.1 percent between January and May of 2007,” Mayor Stratton said.

Mayor Stratton was also joined by Schenectady County Legislator Ed Kosiur, who also serves as Vice Chair of the County Legislature. Through a cooperative agreement between the city and the county, Schenectady receives up to \$125,000 in funding annually approved by the County Legislature to fund community policing activities in the city and up to \$450,000 annually to support a county-wide Hazardous Materials (Haz-Mat) Rapid Response Team operated by the Schenectady City Fire Department.

"Keeping our neighborhoods safe for our children and families has always been a top priority of mine," Vice Chair Kosiur said. "On the County Legislature I have worked to secure half a million dollars to put more police on the streets of Schenectady. Working together -- the mayor, the city council and the county legislature will put police where they're needed to fight crime."

Mayor Stratton credited the strong partnership developed since 2004 among the city, county and state government leaders to work cooperatively in targeting crime reduction and public safety in Schenectady. "Clearly, over the last three years, we have proven that working together works. I look forward to working with Schenectady County, the State of New York and our leaders in Albany and Washington to bring additional dollars to Schenectady in support of public safety," Stratton said.

Mayor Stratton also cited his recent appointment of former New York State Police Superintendent Wayne Bennett to the position of Schenectady Public Safety Commissioner as a move to further strengthen discipline and management in the police department.

“Commissioner Bennett brings an unprecedented level of professionalism and discipline to the Schenectady Police Department at a time when it is needed most. Commissioner Bennett has a mandate to implement any and all measures necessary to restore credibility and accountability within the department, and to ensure that Schenectady receives the additional support needed from all available resources to keep our city safe,” Mayor Stratton said.