

Norwalk police pursue new Community Outreach Vehicle

By [Kelly Kultys](#) 5:02 pm EST, Monday, March 4, 2019



Photo: Erik Trautmann / Hearst Connecticut Media

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Norwalk resident Doug Wyse chats with Lieutenant Terry Blake as the Norwalk Police Department hosts coffee with a cop at McDonalds Thursday, September 20, 2018, in Norwalk. The department is looking to add a

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NORWALK — The Police Department wants to beef up its community outreach unit.

The department is in the process of purchasing and upfitting a “Community

Outreach Vehicle” that will be used to provide information, a variety of resources and an avenue for the public to communicate with the officers, according to Deputy Chief Susan Zecca.

“We’ll park it in the community, we’ll have officers there to provide interaction,” she told the Health, Welfare and Public Safety committee of the Common Council recently.

The committee approved the department’s request to use up to \$45,000 from the Choice Neighborhood Initiative Grant, which is administered by the Norwalk Housing Authority, to upfit the base van to include items like storage, countertops, a generator and an awning.

Committee members questioned how the vehicle would be utilized.

“Is this going to be an approachable vehicle or is it going to be a tactical police vehicle?” Councilman Nicholas Sacchinelli, the committee chair, asked.

Zecca assured them that it would be used as a service to the community.

“This is a very approachable vehicle,” she said. “The whole idea is community-oriented. We’ll probably put a wrap on the vehicle — we haven’t determined the design yet but very, very community-oriented. The idea is to bring community in and be able to park it and kind of like a little mobile precinct.”

Zecca said that it would be run out of the department’s Community Policing Unit and would eventually look to replace some of the older units in the department, like the Mobile Community Outreach Police Substation (MCOPS) Vehicle.

“It’s not running very well any more, it’s also a very large vehicle,” she said about the MCOPS vehicle. “This is a much scaled down version of that.”

Councilman Ernie Dumas said that he hopes the new vehicle would provide many of the services the MCOPS vehicle did.

“We did quite a few things with that van,” he said.

Zecca told the committee that the plan was to use the vehicle mostly in the Washington Village area of town and to utilize it more frequently than just taking it out a few times a year for events.

“The officer in the area can park that in the area — people can come in and talk, you can use that as a base of operations,” she said.

Zecca estimated that it would be about eight months from when they purchased the base van to when it would be in use.

Once it was in use, however, she told the committee that the department planned to use it “as much as possible.”

kelly.kultys@hearstmediact.com