

## Mistretta, Susan

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**From:** Michelle Murch <fosmur123@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 2, 2020 9:48 PM  
**To:** City Council - All  
**Cc:** jmcmenemy@seacoastonline.com  
**Subject:** Mounted Patrol

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Dear City Council Members

My name is Michelle Murch. I am a retired Dover Police Officer. Most recently assigned to the Mounted Patrol before my retirement after serving 24 years in Law Enforcement.

The Mounted Unit, of course I support it. I spent many days, nights and plenty of blood sweat AND tears working to make it to be what it was when I retired on March 20th. Many of you know me and know my love and dedication to not only the mounted unit but to the community. The Mounted Unit is a part of our community fiber reaching far outside of Dover's borders. People from all over the state and further know about Dover, the city with the Mounted Patrol. I have to say that I have met more people in my 14 years on the mounted unit than any other officer could do in 40 years on routine patrol.

The Mounted Patrol has an impact that no other community policing unit could ever have. In 24 years of Law Enforcement I have pushed a cruiser, walked the beat, rode a bike, participated and helped implement Bigs with Badges and also worked as a Detective undercover. You could say I have worn many hats in my career. This being said I have never made the impact that I made while on Mounted Patrol. The horses have been assigned to every public event in the downtown. The presence of a mounted officer has compares to no other. They are 10 feet tall, literally. This means people can see the officer above a crowd and from far away. This is a source of security and also a deterrent for crime. Is there any wonder why the tagging's downtown have taken a sudden turn for the worse? No officer presence downtown. No omni present 'horse cops'. This is what it looks like 8 weeks after "suspending" the unit during a stay at home order. What will the upcoming months bring?

Here are a few of the "things" the mounted unit does besides make people smile, feel safe and trust the police. We have helped lost children, suicidal adults and wandering dementia patients. The horses have calmed more than one person having a panic attack and many of our transient population who have been traumatized by drugs and/or violence find solace in petting the horses which leads to talking to the officers (equine therapy). This is how connections are made. We have guarded crime scenes and chased criminals. We have cleared blocked sidewalks at rally's and acted as security for presidential candidates. We have attend nearly every concert held at Henry Law Park. We have visited the schools and patrolled the community trail. We have given driving directions and found addicts overdosing. We have checked the welfare of Dover's homeless on the most frigid winter days and helped get them services they need. We helped get alcoholics and heroin addicts into rehab and help the homeless find permanent housing. We heard the voices of those who had no-one just us. We broke down the barriers. It's what we were established to do. This is not the time in our country to take away one of the biggest connections the public has to the police department. A bike cop just isn't the same, ask anyone.

I know that the existence of the Mounted Unit is not a council decision in the end. When times are tough managers manage to continue those operations which enhance the community. The unit has operated without interruption, even when there were less authorized police officers for over 20 years. The article stating that my retirement was one of the issues for the unit is inaccurate. I informed the administration that I would like to retire and remain on the unit in a part time capacity in 2018. I let them know that if that was not to happen I would retire in 2020. I was finally told conclusively at the end of 2019 that I would not be allowed to stay on part time per City Manager Joyal. I told them at

that time I would retire within the year. This gave sufficient time for them to prepare for my retirement. I had also told the PD many times that we needed to have a succession plan for when I left, but that was never accomplished. My retirement was not a surprise, the blame does not fall on me.

As for the piece in the article stating that no officers have come forward for the mounted assignment, that is also UNTRUE. There is at least one officer that immediately came forward upon hearing of my retirement and he already knows how to ride and knows about horses. There are at least two other officers who expressed interest in the assignment, but nothing was moved on before my last day. A meeting was planned for immediately after my departure and it was determined that the new horse still in training was to be immediately returned to his owner. This speaks volumes. Why would you return a horse that we just spent 5 months training if you planned to continue the unit. Horses are herd animals. They DO NOT live alone, it is cruel they feel extremely stressed. By returning Benny, CJ would have been left alone. I brought CJ home at one point when our other horse was hospitalized so he could be with my horses and not hurt himself or make himself sick being left alone. It doesn't make sense when the "plan" was to continue the program.

People give extra money on top of their taxes to help support the program. People who have unfortunately passed leave money in their wills to support the horses. Clear examples of the impact the horses have on the community.

I am deeply saddened by this obvious plan to disband the unit. This is not a situation of unfortunate circumstances, there are so many things that led me to know that as soon as I retired this would happen, COVID-19 was simply a convenient segue to get there. We worked extremely hard for many years to connect with the community and we did. I am proud to say I was part of The Dover Mounted Patrol and helped it become what it was. We were given the Community Champion Award for this very work last year. The Dover Mounted Patrol IS COMMUNITY POLICING.

IF the unfortunate decision is made to end The Dover Mounted Patrol let the community know that CJ will have a safe place to land for his retirement. He can come HOME with me. This was always the plan when he was purchased and we became partners. I will be sure to give him the attention and care he deserves without hesitation, it's the least I can do for the years he so proudly served the community.

Many thanks,

Michelle Murch  
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