The Winchester Police Department has been in a basic maintenance status since early two-thousand twenty-one due to extremely short staffing and other issues causing the department to adopt a reactive policing approach and triaging calls for service which limited the level of service the department has been able to provide to the Town of Winchester. These staffing issues required the department to heavily rely on mutual aid partners for the use of on-call officers responding to home after hours. Despite these limitations, the department received over forty-five hundred calls in Two Thousand Twenty-three. Since September we have taken steps to reverse this trend. Among those steps have been:

* Meeting with members of the community and our community partners in Cheshire County to identify areas we need to improve so we can better serve our community.
* Using several recruitment processes which garnered us twenty-seven applicants twelve of whom we interviewed. Out of this pool we selected two outstanding candidates who will hopefully start at the New Hampshire Police Academy in February and graduate in June to begin their field training program. The department will be conducting an additional hiring process beginning at the end of February to address the department’s remaining staffing needs as well as a review of the department’s rank structure.
* We hired Officer Eric Pouliot a retired Keene Police Officer to serve as the department’s part-time School Resource Officer.
* We hired Officer Brianna Rogers who joined us on January 25th. She has five years of police experience in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.
* We contracted with an outside agency to audit the department’s evidence room and have begun to take steps to implement the recommendations of the audit.
* Due to forward-thinking by the town to set aside funds each year in the capital budget each year, the police department was able to replace Cruisers Two and Three with new Dodge Durango Cruisers. The cruisers replaced had over one hundred and forty thousand miles. The new cruisers will be a cost savings to the town in the upcoming years and the department has spent over forty- three thousand dollars on repairs on the aging cruisers in the last three years which in the cost of one of the new cruisers. The new vehicles come with a three-year/36,000 mile five-year/ 60,000-mile powertrain warranty. To further save the town the several thousand-dollar cost of re-painting the new cruisers silver the decision was made to keep the cruisers black and adopt a brighter graphics style for the cruisers. Both these cruisers went into service at the beginning of February.
* We have begun developing a comprehensive training plan for our employees to add to their professional development and better serve our community.
* Applied for a grant to replace the department’s aged body-worn camera system and have begun the process to obtain grant-funded improved Highway Safety Equipment for the department.

Chief Charles Rataj, Police Administrator

David Rice, Captain