

Police substation to open soon in Pleasantville

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An idea at least three years in the making — establishing a full-time police patrol force out of an office at the Pleasantville bus station — looks to come true next month.

The bus station office at 2 E. West Jersey Ave. has long been a meeting point and staging area for reserve and auxiliary police officers, Police Chief Sean Riggin said.

“It was a natural progression to use this area to expand the full-time patrol force to this area. The concept was originally conceived by (former) Chief Ruiz and Mayor Tweedle and then progressed over time to where we are today,” Riggin said.

The bus station sees the same type of petty property crimes and drug-related offenses as any other high-traffic transit area, Riggin said.

“This is especially pronounced at our bus station due to our central location in southern New Jersey with easy access to the island communities, the Atlantic City Expressway and the Garden State Parkway,” Riggin said.

Time and again, city residents tell police they value their presence in high-traffic areas, Riggin said.

“This serves to both reduce crime in the short term and embolden positive community factors in the long term as both the stakeholders and the criminal element see that we are invested in the site and the surrounding community,” Riggin said.

A portion of the building has been city property since the major expansion of the bus station 20 years ago, Riggin said. It has had a variety of uses from reserve police, to leased restaurant space, to storage over that period.

The eastern half of the building needed minor renovation, network connectivity improvements and equipment upgrades to make it a functional office, Riggin said.

Pleasantville City Council President Judy Ward, one of the council members who represents the 2nd Ward, where the bus station is located, said the substation will help deter crime.

“It will make the transit community feel much safer. I’m very much in support of it,” Ward said.

The startup cost for this project was in the neighborhood of \$10,000 with very minimal ongoing cost, Riggin said.

It is relatively inexpensive because Barry Ludy, the city’s chief finance officer, and city Administrator Linda D. Peyton found ways to incorporate the substation into the city’s network infrastructure and spending plan, Riggin said.

“We believe the benefit to our community far outweighs this temporary cost,” Riggin said.

The bus station is the most obvious location to expand the presence of the patrol bureau, Riggin said.

“While many neighborhoods and businesses have offered to donate space and services for a substation, we lack the personnel to open more than one substation at this time,” Riggin said.

As a matter of operational security, Riggin would not give any specifics on how many officers would be stationed at the substation, but the officers at the substation would be able to respond to emergency calls and would not be tied to the location, he said.

The substation is anticipated to be fully functional before April 1, Riggin said.