

Thanks to the new police administration Wallingford has an "**Rx Prescription drop**" location.

### **It is the police station ...**

where any citizen, 24 hours a day, every day of the year can bring unwanted and unused medications to the counter and hand it over to a police officer.



Police chief, group find common ground.

By Eric Vo

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**WALLINGFORD** — After meeting with new Police Chief William J. Wright, Coalition for a Better Wallingford founder Ken Welch says he accepts the decision not to install a prescription drug drop box in the lobby of the Police Department because Wright said the public can already turn in unwanted prescription medication at the department.

While residents are encouraged to dispose of unwanted prescription medication by following the FDA's guidelines, Wright added that they can also turn in unwanted prescriptions at the main desk of the Wallingford Police Department at any time of the day.

"We've accepted prescription medication that they aren't comfortable disposing on their own; we've been doing that service to the community as long as I've been here," said Wright, the former deputy chief who took over as chief last month. "We serve the purpose already. I'm not opposed to the drop box, but we're already providing that service now."

The subject of a drop box had led to a contentious debate after previous Police Chief Douglas Dortenzio and Mayor William W. Dickinson Jr. refused to allow it due to concerns over related costs and security.

After meeting with Wright, Welch said he realized the town does have a drop box. "The box just got a lot bigger because basically they're going to take anonymous prescription drugs 24/7," Welch said. "They're doing it without the symbolism of the box and we're happy about that. It's huge."

The department also hosts periodic prescription drug collections.

The organization says it's looking forward to working with the department on continuing its mission to prevent drug overdose deaths.

"I'm happy with where we're at and happy to put this to bed for now," said Welch. "At this point, I'm glad to work with them as we move forward to other things and having their support with some of our other initiatives."

The two met this past Tuesday to discuss "mutual interests," including the previous request for a drop box and giving police officers access to Narcan, a prescription drug that can be used to reverse the effects of heroin or other drugs. The town's ambulances are already equipped with the drug.

Wright said the Narcan issue is "localized" and that police don't need to carry the drug because paramedics already have it. "I don't have any cases to point to where the Fire Department was not able to respond appropriately and administer Narcan to those who needed it," Wright said. "... We're fortunate here in town that we have a very robust medical service."

Welch said he also met with Fire Chief Richard Heidgerd, who "assured me of the amount of resources they have." Both Heidgerd and Wright reviewed with Welch the system in place for emergency response.

"Suffice it to say, they have a pretty thorough program to make paramedics available on these calls. I'm very impressed," Welch said. "... They've got some pretty comprehensive procedures in place."

Wright said the coalition has the support of the Police Department with matters both organizations find important to the community. Welch echoed the police chief's thoughts, adding he looks forward to working with Wright to accomplish the coalition's mission.

"We're here to make the environment safe and drug free for the kids. Everything we do is going to be towards that goal," Welch said. "The goal is to work with people to make changes that are long lasting and effective."

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