

# CANTON POLICE OFFICER ACCEPTS DEMOTION

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**T**he police department's second-ranking officer has accepted a voluntary demotion to the rank of sergeant. David Whirty, who has been a member of the department for nineteen years, accepted the demotion, effective Jan. 7.

First Selectwoman Kathleen C. Corkum said that after former Sgt. Lowell Humphrey was named chief, Whirty was given the option of retaining the rank of lieutenant, without his administrative duties, or becoming a sergeant.

On Jan. 4 Whirty, who had been a finalist for the chief's position, sent the town a letter stating that he had chosen the demotion.

Whirty has been out on sick leave since a Jan. 6 accident in which he severed the tips of two fingers while off duty and was unavailable for comment Monday.

With the demotion, Whirty accepted a \$4,700 pay cut from his lieutenant's salary, Corkum said. Whirty will be paid at the top of the salary scale for a sergeant. However, Whirty will no longer be a classified employee and will be eligible for overtime.

As a sergeant, Whirty will be required to work rotating shifts as assigned by the chief. He was required to return the town-owned car that he had been driving as a lieutenant. Corkum said no decision has been made on what to do with the office that Whirty had been using.

The union representing the patrolmen, detectives and sergeants in the department is threatening to file a complaint with the Connecticut State Board of Labor Relations if Whirty is allowed to become a sergeant.

Kevin Witkos, the president of the Connecticut Independent Police Union, Local 10, said the town does not have a right to force someone into the union. The union has not recognized Whirty as a member.

Corkum said, however, that when someone is promoted or demoted to the rank of sergeant, they must become a member of the union since the position is not a classified position.

Witkos said union members would not be opposed to Whirty's becoming a sergeant provided he was given a new position and other members of the department were allowed to apply for the sergeant's job vacated by Humphrey.

"Past practice is that an open sergeant's position is a means of promotion for union members," Witkos said. "He's taken that away."

Witkos said the union is willing to negotiate the issue with the town, but so far he has not heard anything from the town.

But Corkum said the town does not share that position.

"Right now, there are three sergeants' positions and there isn't any intention of adding any additional sergeants unless the chief wants to make a recommendation and [the selectmen] consider that recommendation," Corkum said.

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