



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Dukes County Sheriff's Office

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Robert W. Ogden
Sheriff

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May 10, 2021

CCMVHB
Laura Silber, Coordinator

Dear Ms. Silber,

The Dukes County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) represents the oldest and largest law enforcement entity on the Island of Martha's Vineyard, employing 41 individuals in a broad range of public safety disciplines including; House of Correction, Jail and Lockup (booking, fingerprinting, processing, bail, and detention prior to arraignment), Law Enforcement, Civil Process, and E-911 Tele-Communications. Our mission is to ensure collectively the public's safety within our county borders and across the island, through management and administration of our respective law enforcement functions. DCSO maintains a comity with the six town Police, Fire, and EMS agencies in an effort to share resources and collaborate on objectives, ensuring the wellbeing of the entire community of Martha's Vineyard. Since 2009, DCSO has been designated an independent state agent, with an annual general appropriation of just over 3 million. DCSO's budget is the second lowest among the 14 Sheriffs of the Commonwealth, despite being in the highest cost of living and housing market. This poses an innate problem with retention of staff due to the disproportionate housing market in conjunction with salary thresholds imposed by the Commonwealth, and an inability for employees to seek more affordable housing outside the County's borders. It is difficult to overcome the Atlantic Ocean as a natural impediment with 24-hour operations.

We are acutely aware of the current affordable housing crisis and its effect on the workforce population, in particular our ability to recruit and retain Law Enforcement, Correctional Officers, and E911 Tele-Communicators. Due to the enormous financial burden and time commitment to train and certify an individual for employment in the public safety sector, as well as an ability to retain that individual in the future, it is incumbent upon each Police Department and Sheriff's Office to provide access to affordable, year-round housing. With current attrition rates rising and a lack of qualified replacements, an increased population, and wages unable to keep pace with the cost of living, we find ourselves in an untenable position.

Therefore, I endorse the Coalition to Create the Martha's Vineyard Housing Bank (CCMVHB) and applaud their commitment to affordable housing on the Island of Martha's Vineyard.

Respectfully,

Robert W. Ogden
Sheriff
County of Dukes County