

# **Marion Police Department, Sippican Elementary School welcome new comfort dog, “Norman”**

“MARION – Chief Richard Nighelli and Superintendent Michael S. Nelson are pleased to welcome a new comfort dog to the Marion Police Department and Sippican Elementary School.

Norman is a 13-week-old Labrador Retriever. He officially joined the department on Friday, June 7.

Sippican Elementary School students voted between a total of three names, with Norman receiving the most votes. Murray came in second and Franklin came in third.

“I am extremely grateful to District Attorney Timothy Cruz who helped identify grant funding that made this programming a possibility for the Marion community,” said Superintendent Nelson. “I’m also very appreciative of Chief Nighelli and SRO Tracy for their leadership and commitment on this initiative as well. Additionally, I’d like to thank Geoff Gorman, Marion’s Town Administrator who has been supportive each step of the way as we worked towards bringing a comfort dog to our school community. Sippican Elementary School is very fortunate to have such strong partnerships supporting education. To be blunt, the faculty, staff members, and students are absolutely ecstatic and I am too!”



*Marion Police Department photo.*

Norman will spend most of his time on shift in the school district with School Resource Officer Jonathan Tracy. He will help with de-escalation, and provide comfort to children and staff in need who may be experiencing or have experienced trauma.

Once old enough, Norman and Officer Tracy will attend an 80-hour 10-day training course which will consist of lessons in obedience, socialization, environmental training, auditory training, proprioceptive (motion) and unexpected stimulus training. The training will take place at Professional Canine Services in Middleborough.

At the conclusion of the program, dogs should be confident, socialized and environmentally sound. All dogs must pass the American Kennel Club C.G.C. (Canine Good Citizen) and the

## A.K.C Temperament Test.

A comfort dog is intended to help connect police with community members to spark conversation and build awareness. People who may be unsure of or uncomfortable with police may be more apt to approach a friendly comfort dog which will open up opportunities to make connections.

Norman will also assist with difficult police calls, especially those involving children. He will also make routine visits to senior centers, nursing homes and community events.



*Marion Police Department photo.*

"We have been eagerly awaiting this day for some time now and I am beyond thrilled that Norman has joined us," said Marion School Committee Chair April G. Nye. "We know that research has shown that there are many benefits of having comfort dogs in elementary schools with children, like helping teach empathy, helping with developing stronger social skills, as well as helping build stronger bonds between students and the

school community, just to name a few. This new addition will have ways to have a positive presence and I can't wait for our students to have this opportunity."

"We are very excited about this initiative," said Chief Richard Nighelli. "There were several moving parts to this and so many people to thank including our town officials, Superintendent Nelson, Sippican School faculty and students, DA Cruz, Marion Animal Hospital, and of course Officer Tracy. Our department continues to look for ways to have a positive presence in the community and this initiative is an example of that commitment."-Marion Police Department.