

# THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

Community-supported news for Bedford, Massachusetts

The Citizen Digest    Town Election 2013    Letters    School News    Bedford Blogs    Useful Links    Archive    About Us    Contact

## Senate Bill 52: Communities for Restorative Justice

2013 JULY 25



C4RJ police partners gather for restorative justice legislative hearing at the Massachusetts State House. L-R: Sgt. Matt Pinard (Littleton), Lt. Leo Crowe (Carlisle), Det. Mike Sallese, Chief Robert Bongiorno (Bedford) – Courtesy image

By Julie McCay Turner

Robert Bongiorno, Bedford’s Chief of Police, represented police chiefs from Acton, Arlington, Ayer, Boxborough, Cambridge, Carlisle, Concord, Groton, Littleton, Stow and Wellesley at a recent hearing in support of [Senate Bill 52, An Act Promoting Restorative Justice Practices](#) at the Massachusetts State House. [Click here to read Chief Bongiorno’s testimony.](#)

The chiefs are part of the [Communities for Restorative Justice](#) (C4RJ) Police Chiefs Council, and Bongiorno is also a member of C4RJ’s board of directors.

Bedford’s State Senator Michael Barrett, a co-chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities, which held the hearing, is also one of the bill’s co-sponsors. “The courts are overworked,” said Barrett, “If all the parties can get some satisfaction using something less elaborate, let’s go for it. Judges and other court officials would welcome the change.”

In an email exchange with The Citizen, Chief Bongiorno said he is hopeful of the bill’s passage and proud to have represented C4RJ’s board and its Police Chiefs Council at the hearing. He continued, “Senate Bill 52 will create an option for law enforcement and court personnel to refer certain criminal cases to a community restorative justice program in lieu of or alongside other responses.”

Bedford Selectman Margot Fleischman, who also serves on the C4RJ board, notes that Bedford is



The Bedford Citizen is supported in part by a grant from the Bedford Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

To see more community events and announcements, visit our sister site, The Citizen Digest.

### CONNECT WITH THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

Get our daily email digest and the week’s summary on Sunday morning:

Full Name

Email \*

Subscribe



### CATEGORIES

[Appreciation](#)

[Arts and Events](#)

[ATM 2013](#)

[Bedford TV](#)

[Board of Health](#)

[Businesses in Bedford](#)

[Capital Expenditures](#)

[Citizen Digest Events Calendar](#)

[Community Preservation](#)

[Community](#)

### SEARCH

### ARCHIVES

[July 2013](#)

[June 2013](#)

[May 2013](#)

[April 2013](#)

[March 2013](#)

[February 2013](#)

[January 2013](#)

[December 2012](#)

[November 2012](#)

[October 2012](#)

fortunate to be a community participating in C4RJ. "In a town such as ours, which prides itself on being a great place for young people," Fleischman said, "restorative justice practices are also available to help us address school bullying and juvenile offenses – situations in which the traditional justice system might not be as effective in holding accountable those who caused the harm, while at the same time offering them the opportunity to make amends in a meaningful way."

C4RJ was started in Concord in 1997, when a pair of community leaders organized a forum on restorative justice that drew 230 interested participants. Len Wetherbee, then Concord's Chief of Police, stepped in as a partner in the endeavor saying "The undertaking is enormous . . . but we're not going to let this drop." As the current chief of the Moultonboro, NH, police force, Wetherbee continues to serve as an advisor to the organization.

After a period of study, Concord's first case was referred in 2000. The Town of Carlisle joined the effort, and soon Communities for Restorative Justice became a reality, with a formal board structure and, today, 100 volunteers.

According to C4RJ's website, there are three basic principles behind all restorative justice programs:

**Crime is a violation of people and relationships.** *Yes, a law may have been broken, but the harm is primarily against people, not an abstract law or other state entity.*

**Crime creates harms, needs, and obligations.** *If crime upsets the balance, and results in actual harms and needs, then who should be primarily obliged to restore that balance?*

**Those most affected should be meaningfully included and empowered.** *If John broke into Ms. Jones's home, we should ask Ms. Jones what she wants and needs from the process.*

And the site offers links to additional information:

To learn more about restorative justice and recommended readings, [click here](#).

To learn more about common misunderstandings about restorative justice, [click here](#).

Chief Bongiorno concluded, "Referral [to restorative justice] may be made at pre-complaint, arrest, pre-arraignment, sentencing or post sentencing, and is contingent upon victim wishes."

Like 6 0 Tweet 2 Share



from → Public Safety

Updates	September 2012
Conservation Commission	August 2012
Department of Public Works	July 2012
Election 2012	June 2012
Election 2013	
Features	
Finance Committee	Six-year-old girl and mother found in getaway car allegedly used by two Lowell men in New Hampshire
Hanscom	
Historical Society	
Housing	July 29, 2013
Library	
Planning Board	Deadline for Citizen of Year nominations
Public Safety	July 28, 2013
Recreation Department	Obituary: Paul W. Allison
School Committee	July 24, 2013
School News	
Selectmen	
Sports	
State House News	
Town boards and volunteer committees	
Town Services	
Trails Committee	
Transportation Advisory Committee	
Uncategorized	
Youth and Family Services	

FROM THE YOUR TOWN BEDFORD PAGE ON BOSTON.COM