

Police firing range supported by those who use it



PAUL BILODEAU/Staff photos

U.S. postal inspectors use the Plaistow shooting range for their biannual shooting qualifications.

RIGHT ON TARGET

BY DUSTIN LUCA
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PLAISTOW — The tactical training facility on Wilder Road is more than a firing range for local law enforcement officers. It's a facility they built — with no tax dollars.

Everything at the facility was set up by those using it, along with some business donations, police Chief Stephen Savage said.

The facility is worth about

\$150,000. When Savage joined the force 27 years ago, the range wasn't much more than a pocket of land behind the town's landfill.

Targets were often bulky items abandoned at the site, Savage said.

"I've been here since the days of shooting refrigerators," he said. "We've undergone a significant metamorphosis in 27 years."

Today, several agencies use the

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Town of Plaistow Police Department Training Facility

This Facility Built Through the Generosity of:

HOME DEPOT FOUNDATION	FRESHWATER FARMS
BILL BARTLETT & SON LANDSCAPING	TEAM DEPOT
VILLAGE VINYL	MOSNIHAN LUMBER
AL HOYT & SON	AMERICAN CONCRETE
GUSBY CONSTRUCTION	FENCES UNLIMITED
BOB FARRELL & SON CONSTRUCTION	WALMART
STEVEN LEAVIS INC.	PLAISTOW CABINET
FLOWERHILL POLICE DEPARTMENT	
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U.S. Postal Inspectors
recertify at firing range

A number of groups and organizations have been credited with helping build the Plaistow Police Department's tactical training facility.

TARGET

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site. Danville, Hampstead and Haverhill, Mass., police all use the site for annual re-qualification.

U.S. Postal Inspectors also come to the site from all over New England and upstate New York to train.

Targets are donated. Training classes are held in a building built with donations. A donated generator powers heaters and air conditioners that also were donated.

All organizations that use the facility do so through memorandums of understanding that basically establish one thing: If you use it,

you improve it.

Because of that, no tax dollars have been appropriated for the facility, Savage said.

"This isn't a popular thing to spend money on," he said. "We all know the importance of training, but when it comes down to tax dollars, we don't stack up to recreation."

Not everyone is a fan of the facility. Although it's typically active only on weekdays when most residents are at work, the site does generate noise complaints from neighbors.

They crop up for both the Plaistow facility and another site used by Kingston police not too far to the north, Savage said.

The facility has seen

significant work over the past several years. The city of Haverhill recently donated about \$500 worth of material and labor to repair a fence and gate on the property.

"There's a lot of sweat equity invested in it," Savage said. "You can't just come in and shoot. You have to bring something to the table."

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service provides the targets.

"We entered into an agreement with the chief," Postal Inspector Sean Dever said. "We'll come down, donate supplies like cardboard, the frames, if you let us shoot here."

About a dozen inspectors were at the site earlier this week for their biannual

requalification training. They used handguns at different ranges, firing while standing, crouched and prone to the ground.

The site is perfect for postal inspectors, due to its outdoor nature, where they hold training rain or shine.

"Our operators and agents have to come out. It doesn't matter if it's raining, snowing," Dever said. "We can't dictate when a firefight is going to happen. That's realistic. That's real life."

Having a building nearby with an outdoor canopy helps for training in extreme weather like blinding snow.

"To have somewhere you can go out and shoot, and then come in from the elements, is

huge," Dever said.

The agency is looking forward to pitching in for the facility's next major upgrade: a new rifle range.

Right now, the rifle range is just an area of dirt with some marked stakes sticking out of the ground.

Once completed, it could provide adequate training for snipers shooting from 100 yards away, Dever said.

Savage is eyeing the addition of a rifle range, too. But his first priority is paving the existing range, which has enough space for targets up to about 25 yards away.

That's expected to cost about \$18,000 and be done sometime this summer. Once it's paved, cleaning up

ejected brass would become a lot easier.

Right now, anyone using the range saves empty brass casings that come from the weapons. Once a decent collection is built up, it's sold as scrap and the money goes into the site, Savage said.

He'd rather put it into a savings account, he said. A revolving account would accomplish that, he said.

Until then, the site will continue to be supported by those who use it.

"They take ownership of it and get fussy about people screwing with it," Savage said. "I'm not too interested in soliciting 15 departments to come in here. Can you imagine the calendar?"