



TOWN OF VERNON

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MEDIA ADVISORY

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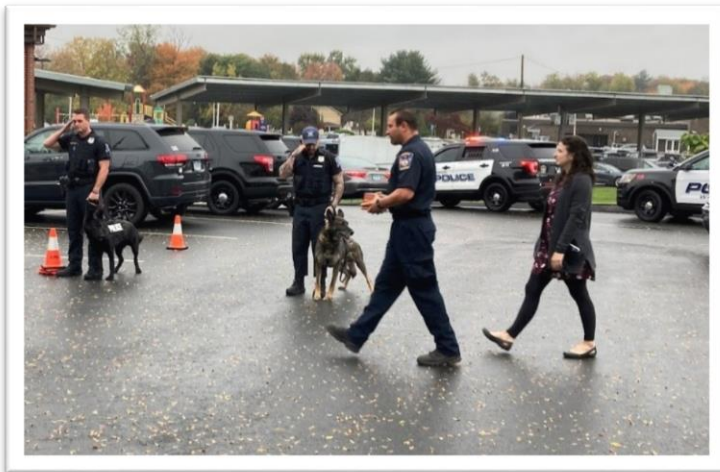
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Mayor

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Vernon Police Honor and Say Goodbye to K-9 Thor

(VERNON, Connecticut) – Vernon Police K-9 Thor, an 8-year-old Belgian Malinois/German Shepherd mix who served with Officer Bryan Sembersky for seven years, was remembered and honored during a private ceremony Monday at Vernon Police Headquarters.



Vernon Police Officer Bryan Sembersky carries a small wooden box containing the remains of his K-9 partner Thor.

Officers, police department personnel, town leaders and staff joined by K-9 handlers from other police departments, snapped to attention as Sembersky approached police headquarters carrying a small wooden box containing Thor's remains. A moment earlier the K-9 handlers escorted Sembersky to police headquarters.

Thor died October 16 after becoming ill with an autoimmune disorder and pneumonia. Sembersky was at his side when Thor passed.

Police Chief John Kelley, himself a former K-9 handler, said police officers and police dogs build an extremely close bond.

"When you're with a K-9 partner you're with that dog 24/7, you're with that dog more than your spouse, your partner," Kelley said. "And the loss is extremely painful."

Sembersky was joined by his wife Lauren, who spoke about the role Thor played in their family. She recalled a scene from Disney's "101 Dalmatians" where the dogs and their owners have similar looks and personalities.

Thor and her husband, she said, were alike, “both with hard exteriors, head strong and unyielding. But once you crack the exterior you find the utmost devotion to work, to play, to one another. Their bond was special – always testing one another, pushing one another.”

Officer Jeff Condon, who is partnered with K-9 Tengo, recounted some of the highlights of Thor’s time as a police K-9, including several instances where he and Sembersky found drugs, an important piece of evidence, or tracked down a suspect.

“While we grieve the loss of K-9 Thor, we are also losing an incredible K-9 handler,” Condon said. “Bryan’s work ethic and dedication as a K-9 handler will be hard to replace.”

The final tribute to Thor came via police radio as a dispatcher noted Thor’s end of watch.

Sembersky did not speak during the ceremony. He was comforted afterward by friends and colleagues.

With the loss of K-9 Thor, Vernon resident Lisa Moody is leading an effort to raise funds to purchase and train a new police dog for the Police Department. She led a previous effort several years ago.

“We know that police dogs add greatly to our police department’s ability to do its job, and to the safety of our community,” Moody said. “While we can never replace Thor, we can help our police department obtain and train a new dog. Vernon residents have a record of generosity and I hope they will consider donating.” Additional information regarding this fundraising effort will be shared in the coming days.

About the Town of Vernon

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents and values the natural environment. With a resident population of approximately 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford, and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in “New England's Knowledge Corridor” with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country.

Designated a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870- 3670 or visit www.vernon-ct.gov.

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Vernon Police Chief John Kelley speaks at Monday’s memorial as Officer Bryan Sembersky and his wife Lauren look on.