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E-ticketing in futures of Mahwah, Ramsey police departments

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BY BARBARA BOUCICAUT

OF SUBURBAN NEWS

MAHWAH SUBURBAN NEWS

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Mahwah police officers will soon have a new tool at their disposal while enforcing the rules of the road: electronic ticketing.

And they will likely not be the only ones. Authorities in other northwest Bergen County communities, including Ramsey, Wyckoff, Waldwick and Midland Park, are testing the technology to determine whether it would improve their operations.

Currently, as with most departments, Mahwah police officers issue tickets for violators, a copy of which must be entered into their records by a municipal court clerk for inclusion in the statewide system.

With e-ticketing, the officer scans the driver's license and registration and the information is automatically, simultaneously entered into the municipal and state database systems, and tickets for traffic violators are printed at the scene.

The electronic system cuts down on the time it takes to issue a ticket to approximately two minutes, said Mahwah Police Chief James Batelli. More importantly, an officer would no longer need to look down while writing a ticket, a time during which Batelli said officers are "vulnerable."

Batelli added that officers would also have more time to patrol, as the system would reduce clerical work.

"There are all positives to this," he said.

Funds for the e-ticketing system — which involves equipping 15 Mahwah patrol cars with a small laptop computer, a scanner and a printer, priced at \$45,500 — will come from an escrow account of money seized during criminal investigations and subsequent civil forfeiture, said Batelli.

The township will be reimbursed for its outlay by the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office, Batelli said.

The department is contracting for the equipment with Advanced Public Safety Inc., which has its



TARIQ ZEHAWI/THE RECORD FILE PHOTO

Mahwah Police Officer Rosario Zito writing a traffic ticket, which will soon be a thing of the past.

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headquarters in Florida and offices in New Jersey, said Batelli.

Batelli said [Mahwah](#) police expect to begin e-ticketing in November and to have it fully operational by the end of the year.

[Ramsey](#) Police Chief Bryan Gurney said his department is considering implementing the e-ticketing system and has already received approval to use money to purchase the equipment from the Drunk Driving Enforcement Fund.

"We had a demonstration recently, and it looks like a system we'll probably go to," he said.

Gurney did not return a call seeking more information on Friday, Oct. 8.

[Wyckoff](#) Police Chief Benjamin Fox said his department may purchase the system in the future, depending on cost considerations.

But police departments in [Waldwick](#) and [Midland Park](#) are not joining the rush to e-ticketing.

For towns that are unable to cover the cost of equipment outright, as [Mahwah](#) is doing, some of the vendors are subsidizing the purchase by taking a portion of the proceeds from each fine a town issues.

[Waldwick](#) Police Chief Mark Messner, for one, said he does not agree with this.

[Midland Park](#) Police Chief John Casson said his department issues too few summonses to make the purchase worthwhile. Casson also cited the subsidy policies, adding the equipment would be too expensive for his small department to be able to purchase outright.

Batelli compared having a vendor subsidize the purchase of the equipment to taking out a high-interest loan.

"We didn't buy into that," he said.

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