Weare officers to wear body cameras

‘Early intervention’:
Chief says cameras are in response to lawsuits the town recently settled.

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WEARE — As a result of recent lawsuits against the town, police officers will soon be wearing body cameras while out on patrol.

“Yes, of course it’s because of recent lawsuits settled,” Weare Police Chief John D. Velleca said Thursday.

“It’s no secret there has been a problem in the department and this will give us a chance to identify problems with officers in the field and correct them through discipline or training. It’s an early intervention in regard to that,” Velleca said.

Two cases settled this month include a $57,500 lawsuit brought by

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The body camera made by Taser that Weare police officers will soon be wearing in the field. COURTESY

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Carla Gericke, president of the Free State Project, who was arrested in March 2010 for videotaping officers during a
traffic stop, and a $300,000 settlement for the August 2013 killing of Alex Cora deJesus of Manchester during an undercover drug deal gone bad.

Velleca said the cameras won’t be used in the field for about another month, after officers complete their training and review the policy.

So far, none of the police officers have expressed concern over using the cameras, according to the chief.

The small waterproof and rugged cameras are made by the Taser Company exclusively for law enforcement and are the Axon model. They come equipped with audio and can’t be manipulated. The video cannot be downloaded by the individual officers. The video will be reviewed periodically and will be incorporated in the officer’s daily reports.

Some video could help prosecute cases, Velleca said.

“It seems to have evidence value. We would treat video as any other piece of evidence at that point,” the chief said.

The camera will be worn on the officer’s chest. Officers will inform citizens they are being recorded, Velleca said.

“The Weare Police Department is a transparent agency that strives to maintain the highest level of accountability to the community we serve. Equipping our officers with body-worn cameras will enhance our level of accountability,” the chief said.

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