

MICHAEL G. BELLOTTI NORFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF

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SHERIFF BELLOTTI HOSTS SUMMIT ON USING TECH TO INCREASE SECURITY AND SAVE MONEY

DEDHAM, MA, Jan. 19, 2016 – Norfolk County Sheriff Michael G. Bellotti said he was pleased with the lively panel discussions at a summit he hosted last week on the issue of increasing the use of video conferencing in the state's criminal courts.

The use of video technology to hold hearings with pretrial detainees while they remain in a jail instead of being driven to court for the day has been in use for a number of years, but in relatively small numbers. The sheriffs' offices around the state still transport a large majority of defendants to court for their hearings.

But with steady improvements in technology and more comfort in using it, there has been a push from officials in courts and corrections to use video conferencing more to take advantage of its efficiencies.

Sheriff Bellotti's summit, entitled, "The Future is Now! Video Conferencing and the Massachusetts Judicial System," was held at Curry College on Jan. 14, attracting about 175 staffers and stakeholders from the criminal justice system.

"There are obvious monetary savings that come from vehicles and gasoline not used and man-hours not dedicated," Sheriff Bellotti said. "And there are security benefits too. Many of our courthouses are older buildings that were not designed to handle the current level of traffic. Their detention areas often are inadequate in size and sometimes in terms of security."

But Sheriff Bellotti also acknowledged that defendants' constitutional rights regarding participation in their own defense and right to face their accuser, among others, also must be taken into account.

Public Safety Secretary Daniel Bennett and District Court Chief Justice Paul Dawley delivered keynote addresses at the summit

Panelists included Superior Court Judges Beverly Cannone and Thomas Connors, District Court Judges Mark Coven and Michael Pomarole, Department of Correction Commissioner Carol Higgins O'Brien, Trial Court Security Director Jeffrey Morrow and Regional Security Director Jason Dickie and Quincy District Court Chief Court Officer Jeanmarie Turley.

Also on a panel were Norfolk Assistant District Attorney Peggie Krippendorf, Public Safety Undersecretary Thomas Turco and Trial Court Administrators Dana Leavitt and Joseph Jackson Jr.

"I want to thank all those who participated in and attended the summit and made it such a strong exchange of ideas and information," Sheriff Bellotti said. "And I want to thank Curry College and its president, Kenneth Quigley, for making their outstanding facilities available to us for the event."