

Town of Montville
Montville Law Enforcement Feasibility Committee
Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, January 20, 2015
6:30 p.m. – Room 203 – Montville Town Hall

1. Call to Order

Chairman Pike called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. after establishing a quorum.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

Present were Bill Bucko, Jeff Buebendorf, Joe DePasquale (7:40 p.m.), Robert Giffen, Victor Lenda, Tim May (6:33 p.m.), and Wills Pike. Also present were Lt. Leonard Bunnell and Resident State Trooper Sgt. James Smith (6:46 p.m.).

4. Presentations

a. Fire Marshal Ray Occhialini

Fire Marshal Occhialini provided a PowerPoint presentation of the “Communications System: From the Past to Future”.

In 2009, the Town was approved for VHF licensing allowing them to transition from a very Low Band Radio System to a very high frequency VHF system for the Fire, Police, and Public Works Departments. All of the VHF radio frequencies are narrow banded in accordance with the FCC and P25 standards. Currently, the system allows for the Fire, Police, Public Works, Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA), School Buses, and, in-school administrators to listen and/or communicate with each other. \$100,000.00, in funds received through the Homeland Security Grant, was invested in the new radio system and an infrastructure and upgrading for their radio towers and radios for all four Fire Companies, the Police Department, and Public Works vehicles were purchased. They also went to a line of sight microwave connectivity eliminating the need for any hardwired telephone circuits, thereby adding stability to the system, especially during large storms.

The current Police radio system consists of four receivers — Chapel Hill, Cook Drive, Public Safety Building (Dispatch), and Town Hall — and one transmitter located at Chapel Hill. The portables and mobile units transmit to the receivers, which bring the signal to a voter, which determines the best quality signal and sends the signal to Dispatch and the transmitter. While the units have no issues talking to dispatch on the west side of Town where the transmitter is located, they have difficulty receiving dispatch on the east side of Town. To remedy the issue, the Town’s current radio vendor, *Communications Plus*, recommends adding an additional transmitter to the Cook Drive Tower, which would cover the east side of Town, and converting to a simulcast system allowing the two transmitters — Chapel Hill on the west side and Cook Drive on the east side of town — to transmit simultaneously.

The current radio towers consists of the following:

Public Safety Building – Stand-by Repeater. During the construction of the Public Safety Building, a new 140-foot tower and equipment building along with additional back-up equipment, radio repeaters and receivers were installed. Should the system fail, the Town is able to revert back to those repeaters located on the tower and at least three-quarters of the Town will be covered by radios.

Cook Drive Water Tank – Fire Repeater

Chapel Hill Tower (owned by Northeast Utilities) – Fire Repeater and Backup. Improvements made to the Chapel Hill Tower included raising the Police transmitter antenna 50 feet with a new higher gain antenna.

Town Hall Receiver – Radio receivers for the Fire and Police Departments are installed on the Town Hall Roof improving the capability of the portable radios.

Their ultimate goal is to migrate to a simulcast system that would allow for multiple tower sites to simultaneously transmit without having to locate additional radio frequencies and to provide coverage on the east side of Town. The simulcast system is estimated to cost approximately \$150,000.00 and includes the addition of a Police transmitter/receiver to the current Cook Drive Tower and a computer at the Public Safety Tower Shelter building to process the radio transmissions. An additional \$100,000.00 would allow the Fire Departments to be placed on the simulcast system, freeing up two additional VHF radio frequencies that can, then, be utilized for on-scene tactical channels. For a total of \$250,000.00, the entire Town system can be simulcast.

Mr. Lenda confirmed that the system refers to the Town radio only. Should the Town decide to transition to an independent PD, the department will be required to invest the \$150,000.00 necessary to provide radio coverage for the Town.

The VHF portable and mobile units, which are currently in use, have proven reliable and are more affordable in comparison to the 700mhz and 800mhz radios. Each of the respective departments — Board of Education, WPCA, Public Works, Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) — own, are responsible for, and maintain their own radios and are all interoperable. Each entity may purchase any type of radio they wish as long as it is programmable to the VHF system. Currently, all communications between the radios are recorded, with the exception of Public Works and Bus Garage. Once Regional Dispatch comes into being, an additional recorder to record all of the 40 frequencies 24/7 will be purchased.

Whether the Town decides to transition to an independent PD or not, the PD will be required to upgrade their current mobile/portable units. Should they opt to go independent, the Town will need to invest \$150,000.00 to provide the Police Department with coverage on the eastside of the Town. Should the Town remain with the RST Program, \$170,000.00 will need to be invested to upgrade their current radios to that of the State Police radio system within the next

two years. Lt. Bunnell stated that, in speaking with a Motorola representative, the new 800/900mhz State Police radios cannot be re-programmed for VHF use. The department has been upgrading their current police radios as they fail at a cost of \$3,400.00 - \$3,700.00 per unit. In comparison, VHF units cost \$400.00 - \$700.00. To date, three radios have been upgraded. He will look into the possibility of leasing the State Police radios rather than purchasing them. The new radios can be re-sold to another constabulary, but the old radios will be defunct and cannot be re-sold.

Fire Marshal Occhialini stated that the contracts for Regional Dispatch have been signed and is scheduled to go online by/on July 1, 2015. They are currently awaiting a \$250,000.00 Transition Grant for the purchase of necessary equipment. The company is a non-profit organization, presided over by a Board of Directors. Chairman Pike will contact the Mayor regarding any additional dispatching costs, if any, should the Town decide to transition to an independent PD. Should the contract be terminated, the Town will continue to maintain its infrastructure. All of the dispatchers will take care of all of the participating Towns, i.e., there will be no specific dispatchers handling calls from specific locations. All 911 calls that are received will be noted with the Town from which the call is originating. Currently, the dispatchers in Montville receive all landline calls and police calls are transferred to the State Police Dispatch center in Tolland.

The Committee expressed their appreciation to Fire Marshal Occhialini for his presentation.

b. Town Council Chairman Joseph Jaskiewicz

Town Council Chairman Jaskiewicz clarified his previous statement, stating that the Town Council will review the Committee's findings and, should they recommend a transition to an independent PD, the Town Council would vote upon the issue in the form of a resolution. Should the resolution pass and the public be opposed to the transition, they are free to form a petition and the issue to go to a referendum, as was the case when the issue was presented nine years ago. To this end, he encouraged the Committee to provide as much information as possible to substantiate their recommendation(s), including their findings, the pros, cons, and costs to help educate the public. He also stated that the members of the Town Council would vote in the best interest of the Town of Montville

The Committee informed him of the Department's current lack of adequate staffing and the officers' apparent fear of failure should the department not be adequately staffed, equipped, or supervised prior to transitioning to an independent PD. To this end and to include the involvement of the officers, the Committee will be extending an invitation to the Union Executive Board for their feedback. Town Council Chairman Jaskiewicz recommended the Committee propose a three- or five-year plan during which one to two officers can be hired each year rather than proposing the hiring of six to eight officers at one time.

Following the introduction of the issue with the Public Safety Commission Chairman David Jetmore, the Committee's charge and previous public safety reports are currently being

reviewed and discussed by the Commission. The Commission is currently comprised of two new members, has been having an issue obtaining a quorum for their meetings, and lacks of any leadership regarding the Fire Department. Based upon previous studies and decisions, it is assumed that the Public Safety Commission is in support of forming an independent PD. The support of the Police Officers, Public Safety Commission, and the other various agencies would be favorable.

Questioned as to how this report would be any different from studies that were previously presented to the Town Council, he responded that the issue would be presented under different circumstances, including the recent developments in dispatching and the construction of the new Public Safety Building.

He emphasized that all Boards/Commissions, with the exception of statutorily required Boards/Commissions, are free to provide recommendations, but have no authority. The Town Council, who is the elected legislative body of the Town to represent the people of the Town, maintains the authority to institute Town policies.

Town Council Chairman Jaskiewicz stated that he will propose an addition to the Committee's charge on the Town Council's February Regular Meeting Agenda to include that the Committee also present their recommendation(s).

A short recess was taken at 7:53 p.m. and reconvened at 7:58 p.m.

5. Alterations to the Agenda – *none*.
6. Approval of the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 6, 2015
Motion made by Mr. Pike, seconded by Mr. Buebendorf. Discussion: The following revisions were proposed:

Page 1, Heading: Change year from 2014 to 2015

Page 2, Question 2, Sentence 7: The funds received ~~by~~ from the towns for the Program is deposited into the State's General Fund rather than to the State Police.

A question arose regarding the following sentence:

Page 2, Question 2, Sentence 10: A misconception exists regarding the economic feasibility of the Program since an RST's salary is sustained by the participating town(s), should towns decide to transition to an independent PD.

Motion made by Councilor May to withdraw and hold the approval of the minutes until their next scheduled meeting pending further review of the minutes.

7. Remarks from the public relating to matters on the agenda with a three-minute limit – *none*.

8. Unfinished Business

a. Review of previous independent Police Department studies and reports

1) Presentation of Findings

Chairman Pike reported that he has spoken with Town Planner Marcia Vlaun, who created the Town's Community Report, to assist the Committee with their PowerPoint presentation. He has also spoken with Finance Director Terry Hart who is open and available to answer any questions and/or meet with the Committee.

b. Status and scheduling of the following presentations:

1) Union Executive Board Members

Chairman Pike stated that, as a professional courtesy, he requested and received the Mayor's approval to invite the Union Executive Board Members and plans to hand-deliver a letter of invitation this week.

Discussion ensued regarding whether it would be helpful to them to provide the Board Members with a list of questions or to have an open discussion. It was decided to have an open discussion.

Chairman Pike stated that he would like to begin assimilating their data and forming their report/presentation following their next meeting. Both Mr. Buebendorf and Mr. Giffen will not be in attendance at the February 17 meeting. The re-scheduling of the meeting to February 10, 2015 will be confirmed and voted upon at their next meeting.

The Town Charter currently includes language providing for the creation of an independent Police Department. The question was raised as to whether one of the recommendations should include the updating of the Charter to include the necessary language allowing for the formation of an independent Police Department, including the creation of a Police Commission. The Town Charter currently states that "The Mayor shall act as the Chief of Police until such time as the Town Council creates a Police Department." The need for a Police Commission may be determined at a later time by the Police Chief, Mayor, and relevant parties.

Discussion ensued regarding the difference between an ordinance and a resolution. Contrary to resolutions, which can be changed by subsequent members of the Town Council, an ordinance would send the issue to a public hearing making it harder to overturn and, thereby, further solidifying the decision. It is possible to pass a resolution and work towards an ordinance.

Chairman Pike stated that he aims for a succinct, concise, and clear report that includes a number of graphs and pictures and very little narrative, with the exception of explanations as required by the Committee's charge. The report may be segregated into different "pockets", e.g., staffing, infrastructure, dispatch, administrative, that can be bundled together and/or broken down further, if necessary. Vice-Chairman Bucko stated that their report should be presented in the standard professional format and can simply include a Cover Sheet, Executive Summary, Table of Contents, Overview, Plan of Development, and Recommendation(s). Councilor May suggested that the report

include a statement by each of the members regarding their thoughts to avoid any ambiguity. Mr. Giffen introduced the possibility of dividing the report into sections, each of which may be written by one/two Committee Members. Inclusion of the Almont Report by way of either including excerpts or as a Schedule A was also discussed.

Discussion ensued regarding the then-Town Council's lack of action of the Almont Report and what led to the formation of this particular committee. It was stated that Councilor McNally, Lt. Bunnell, the Public Safety Commission, and others who sought an investigation of the issues of an independent PD instigated the formation of the Montville Law Enforcement Feasibility Committee.

The Lieutenant submitted a report in October regarding the issues and related costs of those items he felt was important. He suggested the report include the following sections and discuss the options and their respective costs:

- Staffing
- Dispatch Services
- Administrative Staffing
- Facilities and Equipment

9. New Business – *none*

10. Remarks from the Public with a three-minute limit

Lt. Bunnell stated that the Building Committee was presented with a number of issues and decisions including the type of building, utilities, location, and configuration of the floor plan. Mr. Bucko consolidated all of the facts and figures together in an understandable and easily readable manner, complete with charts and graphs, for the public and recommended Mr. Bucko be tasked with the formation of the report.

With regards to the January 6 meeting minutes, he suggested deleting the sentence and making the following correction:

~~A misconception exists regarding the economic feasibility of the Program since an RST's salary is sustained by the participating town(s), should towns decide to transition to an independent PD. As such, h~~He does not foresee the costs of the Program increasing in the near future, with the exception of salary increases due to inflation and collective bargaining agreements.

11. Remarks from the Committee Members

Councilor May felt that the Almont Report contained a number of flaws, is dated, and, since then, a Public Safety Building has been constructed and the Regional Dispatch contract has been signed making any reference(s) to the Report somewhat irrelevant, if not, unnecessary. The growth of the Town, itself, should substantiate the need for additional officers, regardless of the costs. He has learned a great deal from the four police professionals and has discovered good reasons for both scenarios. While the department would need to increase their staffing either way, additional staffing

will be required should they opt for an independent PD. He suggested providing a presentation based on the needs and desires of the Town rather than one that is based on the numbers.

Mr. Lenda felt that the facts in their report would speak for themselves. He expressed his appreciation to the Lieutenant as he continues to keep the Committee focused on their charge, staffing, costs, etc.

Chairman Pike commented on the importance of objectivity.

Mr. Giffen suggested concentrating on the need for additional staffing that is necessary to replace those services that will be lost should the Town opt for an independent PD, rather than basing their staffing needs on what is recommended by the FBI or comparative data. Their recommendation(s) should be backed up by facts. The current starting salary of an officer is \$51,000.00/year and is estimated to be approximately \$75,000.00/year with benefits.

12. Adjournment

Motion made by Mr. Lenda, seconded by Commissioner DePasquale, to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 p.m. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor. Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes Miyuki, Recording Secretary