

Town of Montville  
**Montville Law Enforcement Feasibility Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, September 9, 2014**  
6:30 p.m. – Room 203 – Montville Town Hall

1. Call to Order  
Chairman Pike called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. after establishing a quorum.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call  
Present were Bill Bucko, Jeff Buebendorf, Joe DePasquale, Victor Lenda, Tim May, and Wills Pike. Absent was Robert Giffen. Also present was Resident State Trooper Sgt. James Smith.
4. Remarks from the public relating to matters on the agenda with a three-minute limit — none
5. Alterations to the Agenda — none
6. Approval of the Regular Meeting Minutes of September 2, 2014  
Motion made by Councilor May, seconded by Bill Bucko. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor. Motion passed.
7. Unfinished Business — none
8. New Business
  - a. Review of previous independent Police Department studies and reports  
Mr. Bucko commented on the lack of signature(s) and date from the 2013 Public Safety Commission, Police Subcommittee, Public Safety Recommendations Report, which was created following the report by Almont Associates (Almont report).  
  
Chairman Pike opened the discussion stating that a significant amount of time and effort has been spent investigating the matter over the course of many years and there is a significant amount of information to digest and discuss. The Public Works and Finance Directors will be invited to a future meeting(s) for additional discussion.  
  
Mr. Bucko agreed that the reports provide much information regarding issues that are germane to their study, including the role of the Mayor as Chief of Police, types of ammunition and rifles, training, as well as recommendations and a five-year plan. He found that there is a big difference between the current finance reports and the Almont report regarding the costs of the Resident Trooper program. He felt that a small internal task force should have been created by the Town Council to make further investigations following the Almont report.

In response, Councilor May stated that they are, in essence, that internal task force. He suggested that a sheet containing the Committee members' contact information be distributed in the near future. While he continues to digest the material and strives to determine the needs and abilities of the police department, he noted that he spoke with the First Selectman in Preston, who is interested in forming a regional police department in which neighboring communities can coordinate and fulfill the each others needs and improve police intelligence.

Mr. Lenda felt that that both the 1999 and 2000 reports, due to their age, should be held for reference, along with the 2013 report by the Public Safety Commission, which lacks any information substantiating their findings. The 2008 CT Police Chiefs Association report, he felt, provides a good reference point as it clearly explains the Resident Trooper system. Currently, Montville, in his feeling, has a police department with Resident Trooper supervision. It is important to note that, while an independent police department might also request assistance from the State Police, they would only be available to the town upon request and *when possible* as opposed to the Resident Trooper system in which, by contract, they would always be available. As such, an independent police department should provide enough manpower to sustain its own investigations and utilize the State Police as a back-up, per State statute. In terms of a regionalized police department, he felt that they currently have the best regionalization with the State police. In addition, municipalities have mutual aid that allows for neighboring towns to assist the town in need should the State police be unavailable. He also discussed the chain of command of both systems.

Discussion ensued regarding the structure, chain of command and personnel workings of the current Resident Trooper Program, which, by Charter, designates the Mayor or First Selectman as the Chief of Police, and the availability of the State police to assist a town.

Sgt. Smith stated that he views himself as the conduit between the Town, the staff, and the State police. The police department is, basically, an extension of the State police. His responsibility as the Resident Trooper is to the town he serves. In his absence, the duty supervisor of his Troop fills his void. Rather than viewing his position as a supervisory one, he seeks to work together with the Lieutenant who, clearly, has the knowledge and experience of the people and happenings in this town. He recommended that the Committee investigate what they would lose, what would need to be replaced, and the costs involved should they decide to sever their current relationship with the State police.

Commissioner dePasquale clarified that, with an independent police department, in major/violent crime cases, the State Attorney's office would make the ultimate decision as to whether the State Police would be involved in a case and, if so, the incident would become the State Attorney's case. While the town might conduct the investigation, Major Crimes would process the scene and assist in interviews. In contrast to a town, such as Montville, in which Major Crimes would also conduct the investigation. Decisions are often dependent upon the experience and skills of the unit; many times, both the State and the Town police will work together on cases.

Mr. Bucko confirmed with Sgt. Smith that, as stated in section 4.1.2, second paragraph of the Almont report, “The RST [Resident State Trooper] is responsible for direct supervision of the law enforcement operations of all Montville police officers”.

Currently, there are three officers per graveyard shift, should they all be busy on a call(s), who would, then, be called upon should another call come in? Typically, the State Police would supplement the police department until a local officer is available; if an officer is needed for a long-term assignment, an off-duty officer (overtime) might be called in. An officer from another troop may be called in as a last resort. With an independent police department, the State Police may provide assistance on a regular basis, but only *when possible*. In addition, mutual aid would be provided for under the municipal aid pact. Both the State Police and any Police Officer(s) from neighboring towns would arrive with the same authority as the local police.

In response to Mr. Buebendorf, who questioned whether the high turnover rate of Resident Troopers is a legitimate issue in terms of the ability of a Trooper to serve a town, Sgt. Smith stated that some consistency is lost. The average tenure varies depending upon the Resident Trooper and the town he serves, but felt that at approximately four to five years one might begin to feel stagnant. He added that there are several reasons for the high turnover rate, from retirement to promotional reasons and that one of the advantages of his position is the availability of multiple facets within the job, itself, offering great mobility. The Mayor and the Lieutenant might also request a new Resident Trooper while the State makes the final decision. The Resident Trooper serving a town such as Montville must rely on others to do their jobs, but should anything go awry, he would be responsible. In smaller towns, the Resident Trooper is in charge of scheduling, maintenance, and other duties. In response to Councilor May, Sgt. Smith noted that the Mayor defers to himself and the Lieutenant to run the police department and is not involved with the day-to-day operation of the department.

Mr. Buebendorf concurred with Mr. Lenda regarding the older studies and is interested in the thoughts and reactions of the Lieutenant, Sergeant and others regarding the Almont report, which appears to be a kind of wish list. He also questioned how much of the planning of the Public Safety Building coordinates with the recommendations in the Almont study and whether it would be possible to have a tour of the building.

**Motion made by Councilor May, seconded by Vic Lenda, to meet at the Public Safety Building at 6:00 p.m., prior to the next meeting on September 23, 2014. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor. Motion passed.**

Commissioner dePasquale agreed that the Almont report is a wish list of what they wanted should they opt to have a law enforcement entity in town. He added that, as a taxpayer, one of the selling points and intentions for the construction of the Public Safety Building was to create an independent police department. Mr. Bucko concurred that the architect and design of the building was selected and the Town Council agreed that the purpose and intention of the building is to fulfill that function as well as provide for the option to expand.

Discussion ensued regarding the necessity of adequate staffing to watch those who are temporarily housed in one of their holding cells. While the frequency of holding an individual is very low, Community Service Officers (unsworn) who are trained to process and “babysit” the individuals is an option. Another option is to request a nearby correctional facility to hold an individual. He also noted that attention must be paid to the fees of the Resident Trooper program, which is slated to rise in the near future. Commissioner de Pasquale clarified that the 2013 report was written by Amtrak Police Sergeant Jim Moran as discussed with the subcommittee who was tasked to determine the needs of an independent police department.

Discussion, again, ensued regarding the preferred staffing and command structure of an independent police department.

**Motion made by Chairman Pike to hold the 1999 and 2000 report for reference and focus on the other reports going forward. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor.**

Mr. Lenda added that the ordinance currently in place is very limited and would also need to be changed.

Chairman Pike extended his appreciation to Sgt. Smith for his input and tasked the Committee to come to their next meeting with five (5) questions, focusing primarily on the Almont report. Councilor May stated that he will bring the complete Montville Town Budget to all of the meetings for reference. Commissioner dePasquale offered to contact the Chiefs of Police Association and Sgt. Smith, along with Lt. Bunnell, may be able to contact various Chiefs to obtain data from geographically and demographically comparable towns.

9. Remarks from the Public with a three-minute limit — none

10. Remarks from the Committee Members — none

11. Adjournment

Motion made by Councilor May, seconded by Mr. Buebendorf, to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Montville