

Town of Montville
Montville Law Enforcement Feasibility Committee
Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, November 18, 2014
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.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

Present were Bill Bucko, Jeff Buebendorf, Robert Giffen, Victor Lenda, Tim May, Wills Pike. Absent was Joe DePasquale. Also present were Lt. Leonard Bunnell and Resident State Trooper Sgt. James Smith.

4. Presentations

a. Terry Hart, Finance Director for the Town of Montville

Chairman Pike announced that Finance Director Hart is unable to join the meeting this evening and distributed the requested budget information for the Police Department.

5. Alterations to the Agenda

6. Approval of the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 4, 2014

Motion made by Councilor May, seconded by Mr. Buebendorf. Discussion: Mr. Lenda requested the following change on page 8, item 8(b)3, second and third sentences:

~~Mr. Lenda stated that the Commission has provided recommendations in the past regarding increasing the number of officers and was unsure as to whether the staffing issue(s) was relevant to their charge. He felt that the Committee may be spending too much time investigating and that it is now time to move forward.~~ Mr. Lenda stated that the Public Safety Commission has been provided with recommendations in the past from Lt. Bunnell and other members regarding increasing the number of officers and those increases were not approved. The staffing issue(s) are relevant to their charge rather than to that of the Public Safety Commission. He felt that the Committee should continue investigating their findings while sticking to their charge and moving forward.

Mr. Buebendorf requested clarification of the term “in-house comments” on page 3, second full paragraph, last sentence: “Reports for FOI requests in Montville are conducted by the State while the in-house comments are done by the police department.” In-house comments are log entries, CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) comments, or ancillary comments as opposed to full reports or official FOI requests.

Motion made by Councilor May, seconded by Mr. Buebendorf, to accept the amendments to the minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor. Minutes amended.

Voice vote to accept the minutes as amended. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor. Motion passed.

7. Remarks from the public relating to matters on the agenda with a three-minute limit
While he agrees that it is the job of the Committee to not make any recommendation(s), Lt. Bunnell suggested including a five-year plan within which the costs and changes can occur in their report.

8. Unfinished Business

- a. Review of previous independent Police Department studies and reports

It was clarified that the line item for Overtime-Grants includes specific tickets and DUIs from which funds are received from the State. Some of the grants are match-funded and cover various amounts.

It was noted that fuel, vehicle repairs, and vehicle costs appear to be missing from the budget. The total vehicle expenses have remained relatively consistent, with the exception of 2013-2014 due to the purchase of the new police vehicles. It was explained that \$24,399.15 was expended for Training and Conferences (budgeted for \$12,000.00) as the result of, primarily, one individual's quest for a degree, in accordance to the labor agreement.

Though they appear underfunded in a number of the line items, the overall total does not vary significantly from year to year.

The appropriation of \$270,000.00 for overtime compared to Stonington's overtime of \$147,000.00 was discussed. The difference raises the question as to whether appropriate staffing of the police force would lead to a decrease in overtime. In addition, the existence of a possible tendency for fire and police officers to accrue a significant amount of overtime as it goes towards their pension was discussed. The inclusion of overtime correlates with the required minimum patrols, per the union contract. In addition, it must be kept in mind that one of officers departed from the Department in May affecting the overtime costs for that fiscal year. The remaining three (3) officers left from, roughly, June to September 2014 and that affect will be reflected in the current budget year.

In addition to the need for additional officers, the Department is also in need of additional administrative assistance. They currently have 1.5 assistants and are proposing an additional 1.5 assistance should they opt for an independent police force to help with current and added administrative duties, including reports and records. In addition, there is the added function of the processing and management of prisoners. An extra person would be required to fulfill that duty so as to avoid the need to take a patrol officer away from his regular duties. Sgt. Smith reported on an alternative option derived from a recent conversation with Corrigan-Radgowski Correctional Center, who stated that they have agreements with local police departments who may issue a temporary surrender of prisoners (does not include DWIs or short-term prisoners) to their facility, free of charge. It is important to note, though, that this is not typically offered to local police departments and may change should the Center be under a different Warden. On average, six to seven custodial arrests are brought to and processed by the Barracks per week on behalf of the Town of Montville.

Lt. Bunnell distributed a chart comparing the criminal activities in Stonington and Montville, noting the relative similarity between the two Towns. Also included in the chart are the numbers provided by the State Police (noted in parenthesis), which, for unknown reasons, differ from those of Montville. Reasons for the inconsistency can include entry errors and/or the result of the utilization of two different systems of the two different departments. It is important to note that the definition of some of the activities in the two towns may differ, e.g., Summons in Montville includes a motor vehicle or criminal infraction or ticket, which may differ in Stonington whose number of Summons' issued is considerably lower. Sgt. Smith stated his surprise at the number of DWIs in Stonington (57 in 2013) in comparison to Montville (148 in 2013). Councilor May indicated that, while Stonington is a similar sized town, population-wise, the demographics are very different. Assists include assists to an outside agency (DCF, Fire Department, Corrections, State Police, incidents that occurred elsewhere, etc.). Also important to note is the number of total calls responded to by the Stonington PD (12,190 in 2013) includes fire and medical calls, in contrast to Montville PD (9,761 in 2013) who does not respond to such calls unless it is overheard or they are sent to the scene. In addition, Lt. Bunnell noted that, included in his chart is not only the number of total calls received, but also the number of total calls received *and* those activities encountered while the officer was on patrol (16,043 in 2013), further emphasizing the importance of the need to look into what it takes to meet that demand. Only a very small fraction of the calls received are being taken care of by a State Trooper. It is unknown as to the reasoning behind the upwards trend in total calls received, which nearly doubled from 5,820 in 2009 to 9,761 in 2013, and is similar to the increase in the number of miscellaneous calls for service from 9,931 in 2004 to 12,190 in 2013 in Stonington. This trend further supports the Department's need for additional manpower. It was noted that other line items, e.g., mileage, fuel costs, do not appear to have increased accordingly.

The importance of determining the number or percentage of the successful completion of calls received in order for the public to understand the need for additional officers was discussed. Clearly, the Police Department is currently doing their job by responding to the calls, but whether they have the manpower to complete their investigations and arrive to a successful completion for the victim is questionable. On a monthly basis, of the 1,500 calls for service in June, 1,400 in July, and 1,378 calls in August, 1,400 in July and 1,500 in June, an average of 100 of those calls were Type I Complaints, which includes those investigations that one hopes will result in an arrest thereby showing a successful conclusion. During those months, 31-39 of those complaints led to an arrest and can be thought of as a successful conclusion since the bulk of the arrests derive from such complaints. It is important to note that Type I Complaints requires one to three officers at the scene to investigate the matter as well as the completion of written reports.

From the time one is hired, one is paid for approximately 40 weeks during their training process.

In response to Chairman Pike's question regarding who authorizes overtime and how/who determines what is appropriate, Lt. Bunnell stated that, firstly, while the contract requires only

two persons per shift, the police department requires 3 officers on days, 3 on evenings, and 3 on midnights for safety reasons. As the result of these minimum requirements and the allowed time-off for officers, per the labor agreement, the shifts are supplemented. The primary reasoning behind this particular line item being approximately \$50,000.00 over budget in 2013-2014 is due to the shortage of officers. With regards to the difference between the budgeted overtime amounts between Stonington (approx. \$147,000.00) and Montville (\$270,000.00), it is difficult to determine what they may be doing differently and it is unknown as to what is included in their union contract. Stonington also has a floating shift that may aid in decreasing the amount of overtime. While overtime does contribute to their pensions, it is not utilized for that benefit. Rather it exists and is used out of need. Oftentimes, they do not fill one who calls out. Should one go beyond the normally scheduled nine-hour shift, overtime will kick in. On average, overtime is utilized approximately seven to eight shifts per week and accounts for about 25% of the budget. Overtime is considered time and a half and receive double-time for the holidays. Should the department be adequately staffed, overtime would necessarily decrease, but would be held in check as the more officers you hire, the more people are taking time off. In addition, officers must, sometimes, conduct a continuation of their investigations within a certain timeframe forcing them to work beyond their scheduled shift to complete their reports.

Generally, 1 mill is equivalent to \$1 in taxes per \$1,000 in taxable value. It is difficult to determine what the increase in the Town's mill rate would be as it is offset by other factors within the budget.

Due to the possible exiting of two of the towns from the proposed regional dispatch, the figures will differ from the original estimates. A more realistic picture should be painted with the additional discussions with Waterford Police Chief Pendleton and Redding Police Chief Fuchs. Councilor May was impressed with Chief Stewart's ability to steer through, negotiate, and advocate for their product. He stated the importance of speaking with the Public Safety Commission, which is empowered with advocating for public safety. Mr. Buebendorf stated the importance of the Committee being objective. Should their presentation/report identify all of the pros and cons adequately, there should be no need for a recommendation as the information will speak for itself.

Councilor May reported that, in a recent review of the CERC predictions, the Town of Montville foresees an increase in population from 19,000 (includes prison population) to 23,000 over the next five years. Good schools and public safety are the two primary items determining the influx of people and, as such, their task is a very important one in determining the future of the Town.

At the request of the Committee, Mr. Lenda reread the Committee's charge.

Councilor May questioned the amount of the proposed and projected increase in the costs for the RST Program and whether, at some point, it actually will be cost prohibitive for the Town. Lt. Bunnell stated that it is difficult to make such predictions as the increased costs would be dependent upon the financial status of the State. There are Towns with more than one RST.

1) Presentation of Findings

Mr. Buebendorf distributed working documents of the Pros & Cons and the Costs and Savings based upon their previous discussions. He outlined some of the pros as: Consistent leadership (as opposed to relatively high RST turnover), Greater oversight/supervision of officers, Clearer chain of command, and the Public Safety Building's anticipated conversion of an independent police department. Cons include the cost of the impound lot, cost of dispatch/radios, and need for prisoner monitoring personnel and equipment. The issue of the impound lot may be resolved with the proposed acquisition of the DOT garage, which would be used for cold storage by both the Public Works and Police Departments. Mr. Bucko passed around the original design of the impound lot at the Public Safety Building for informational purposes. The cost of \$170,000.00 for the originally proposed impound lot included the clearing of four acres for the lot and an additional acre to provide access to the lot as well as fulfillment of the coastal area management requirements. Mr. Lenda added that a possible option, should the acquisition and/or use of the DOT garage fall through, may be the utilization of twelve of the existing parking spaces in the current parking lot at the Public Safety Building.

Lt. Bunnell will review the Costs/Savings document and e-mail any necessary adjustments and/or additions to Mr. Buebendorf. Following the determination of the salaries, he recommended seeking the help of the Finance Director to estimate the costs for the benefits. Committee Members may also send their input to Mr. Buebendorf. Recurring and non-recurring costs will also be indicated in future revisions.

b. Status and scheduling of the following presentations:

- 1) Murray Pendleton, Chief of Police, Waterford – scheduled for December 2, 2014
Douglas S. Fuchs, Chief of Police, Redding – scheduled for December 16, 2014
- 2) Public Safety Commission, Town of Montville

Mr. Giffen felt that the Public Safety Commission might be able to provide a different perspective on the issue(s). Councilor May concurred, adding that at least the Chair of the Commission should be invited for discussion. Mr. Buebendorf felt that their input would not change their charge, but that their input at the end of their investigations might be helpful. Chairman Pike agreed that, once the Committee has prepared a soft presentation, he would be open to revisiting the idea. The item will be removed from the agenda for the time being.

Both Mr. Giffen and Mr. Buebendorf are interested in inviting Finance Director Hart for further discussion. Councilor May recommended the Committee take the time to digest the report and ask any direct question(s) during office hours. Chairman Pike asked the Committee to review her report and, depending upon their questions, will either direct their questions to her and/or invite her to a future meeting for further discussion. He will forward an electronic version of her report to the Committee.

c. Discussion regarding promoting MLEFC meetings

It was noted that the meeting is published in *The Day*, but not in *The Montville Times* and it was agreed that the Committee is not yet ready to promote their meetings.

9. New Business

a. Approval of the meeting dates for 2015

Motion made by Councilor May, seconded by Mr. Buebendorf. Discussion: Mr. Buebendorf stated that he has a conflict with one, maybe, two of the meeting dates. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor. Motion passed.

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

11. Remarks from the Committee Members

Mr. Lenda recommended that the Committee also invite the District Commander of the State Police to discuss his vision for the RST Program and the Town of Montville, what they are looking at five to ten years down the road, his recommendation(s), and if he sees them continuing to provide RST services or if they are looking for the Town to transition to an independent police department. Mr. Lenda will send the request to Chairman Pike who will forward a formal request to Sgt. Smith who will, then, forward the request to the District Commander.

In response to Mr. Giffen's question, neither the Lieutenant nor the Sergeant were aware of any police departments who were with the RST Program, went independent, and reverted back to the RST Program.

Mr. Bucko asked the Committee to keep in mind that there was a period of time when the Town was paying for the utilities for both the old and the new buildings, resulting in a, seemingly, exorbitant cost during those time periods. In addition, he questioned the costs for fuel oil since the building runs completely on natural gas and the difference between the line items for Building Maintenance and Maintenance - Police Complex.

Mr. Buebendorf thanked Lt. Bunnell for gathering and putting together the information regarding Calls for Service. Councilor May offered to input the information into an excel document, which he will e-mail to all of the members.

Chairman Pike also thanked Lt. Bunnell for putting together the information, Mr. Buebendorf for his work on the Pros/Cons and Costs/Savings, and everyone for all of their input and efforts.

12. Adjournment

Motion made by Councilor May, seconded by Mr. Bucko, to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor. Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes Miyuki, Recording Secretary