

**Southern Police Commission
Continuation Meeting
November 21, 2017**

A public continuation meeting of the Southern Police Commission was held on Tuesday, November 21, 2017 at the New Freedom Borough Council Chambers, 49 East High Street, New Freedom, PA 17349.

Commission Members Present: Roy Burkins, John Trout, John-Paul Whitmore (seated alternate), Doug Young (seated alternate), Robert Herzberger, Jeff Blum, Bruce Merrill (seated alternate), Mike Sharkey (seated alternate)

Commission Members Absent: Buck Buchanan

Alternate Members Present: Peter Schnabel (Commissioner, seated in audience). Brady Terrell

Solicitor: Peter Ruth

Police Department Representative: Chief Boddington, Ofc. Hanson, Ofc. Hefner

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman John Trout at 19:00 who led the pledge of allegiance to the flag and asked those present to remain standing in honor of police, firefighters, EMS, and other first responder's ultimate sacrifice.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Secretary Kirschman reminded Commissioners that SB251, the Local Police Radar Bill, has passed the Senate by 46-3 vote. The offices of Representatives Klunk and Phillips-Hill have been receiving telephone calls with reference to local police radar and that virtually all callers being against the passage of the Bill. So it will be an up-hill battle to get it passed the House. There was discussion as to why people are against local police having radar. Kirschman mentioned that Shrewsbury Borough is the only one of the 4 member municipalities of SRPC that have made and submitted Resolutions favorable to local police using radar, referring the Commissioners to the Radar Coalition of the Pennsylvania State Mayors' Association web site for a list and the resolution text of those municipalities that have submitted resolutions supporting local police radar.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Trout read several letters, the first from Shrewsbury Borough, stating that Council had approved the Police Budget as submitted.

From Stewartstown Borough: As part of the public meeting of the Stewartstown Borough Council and Mayor reviewed the request from Southwest Regional Police Department. This discussion led to a discussion of the long-term viability of the SRPD and Stewartstown's role in that process. The current IGA states that 2018 would be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the PPU system and they feel that insufficient time has passed to complete that evaluation. The Stewartstown Borough Council has passed a motion which states, in effect, that Stewartstown does not wish to participate in merger discussions at this time. The motion further states that, if the SRPC should determine to move forward with a merger, Stewartstown would cease to be a member at the end of 2018. They feel that a merger with either Northern Regional or Southwestern would dilute the effectiveness of local control and make it more difficult to provide police protection to their area. More detailed information is covered in that letter,

which is part of the records of the Police Commission. They feel that opportunities to look at improved efficiencies of the Department during the near term, resulting from the adoption of the PPU system, should be taken advantage of. A merger will not be cost free and Stewartstown does not find it feasible to assume additional costs at this time. At some point, consolidation may become a solution, but not at the current time. The letter was signed by Mayor Herzberger.

Chairman Trout stated that the purpose of this continuation meeting was to take a look at the merger presented by Northern Regional and the letter to the Municipalities from Southwest Regional. During the last regular meeting the Chairman and Chief were directed to send letters of inquiry to other departments. Letters were sent to York Area Regional Police Commission to research possible interest in a merger with us. Chief Damon responded that he will bring this up and their December Commission meeting.

A similar letter was sent to our surrounding municipalities describing the potential value to joining in with this effort. The letter was sent to Springfield, East Hopewell, North Hopewell, Hopewell, Shrewsbury, and Codorus Townships. We're awaiting responses.

There was discussion, led by the Chairman, regarding how Southwestern Regional was made aware of the discussions that resulted in the letter soliciting information that might allow them to propose a solution. Stewartstown, Glen Rock, and Shrewsbury have not responded to the inquiry from Southwestern.

DISCUSSION:

There were questions and discussion regarding what would have to be done to prepare for a merger. Solicitor Ruth replied that such a merger would imply that SRPD, as it exists, would cease to exist. He added that the Commission would wrap up its business, separation agreements would be entered into, and that this process would have to commence July 1, 2018. Detailed discussion of the issues continued. Discussion included suppressing the rancor that seems to surface that prevents cooperative effort and that willfully positive effort should take place to promote the continued success of the Department and Commission.

Concerns were expressed regarding entering into a contract with the officers, the negotiation of which is due during 2018. Chief Boddington pointed out that a negotiated contract should be preferable to both the officers and the Commission. The officers would rather have a successful negotiated contract than an arbitrated contract. Officer Hanson pointed out that the extension agreement is an example of the officers' desire to negotiate amicably.

Concern was expressed regarding Glen Rock's potential of having difficulty meeting their share of the cost targets. Discussion ensued. Glen Rock affirmed its position of always fully supporting the officers of SRPD. Glen Rock has budgetary limitations but has always understood that costs go up over time. The large jumps in cost are what have been problematic for Glen Rock in the past.

Current Commission fiscal policy and actions were discussed several times during the meeting. Concerns were expressed regarding communications of Department financial information with the Borough Councils. It was pointed out that each municipality has representation on the Commission, that financial reports are distributed to those representatives at each regular meeting, that meeting minutes are published and distributed, and that the representatives on the Commission should be carrying that information back to the Council meetings. Those representatives also participate in the budget discussions at the applicable meetings and should be both providing input and carrying that information back to their Councils.

It was pointed out by the Chief and the Solicitor that leaving some other regional departments, such as Northern Regional, would be much more expensive due to the structure of their IGA equivalent. It's suggested that we consider making longer commitments in our IGA, which may include language that makes it more difficult for municipalities to depart.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

- Go back to the Boroughs with the concept of entering into longer term agreements (5 years).
- Be prepared to enter into contract negotiations with the officers for up to 5 years.
- Discuss the costs of leaving SRPD with the councils, to include direct costs as well as on-going liabilities associated with so doing.
- By the January Commission meeting get some sense of stability.

CONCENSUS:

Take back to the municipalities the concept of remaining committed to the continuation of SRPD and consideration for longer-term agreements.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Merrill, seconded by Commissioner Burkins, to adjourn. That motion passed unanimously.



Stewartstown Borough

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November 13, 2017

Commissioner John Trout
Chairman
Southern Regional Police Commission
47 E. High Street
New Freedom, Pennsylvania 17349

Dear Commissioner Trout:

As part of the regular public meeting for November, the Stewartstown Borough Council and I began a review of the request from Southwestern Regional Police Department. This review led to a deeper discussion of the long-term viability of the Southern Regional Police Department and Stewartstown's role in that process. When we executed the Joint Municipal Agreement in the Spring of this year, the parties to the agreement indicated we would use 2018 as a period to evaluate the effectiveness of the new PPU system. The Borough Council does not feel sufficient time has passed to complete that evaluation. Therefore, the Borough Council has passed a motion which states in effect, that Stewartstown does not wish to participate in merger discussions at this time. The motion further states that should the Southern Police Commission decide to move forward with a merger, Stewartstown will cease to be a member as of the end of 2018. Our reasoning is as follows:

- We feel a merger with either Northern Regional or Southwestern would dilute our local control and make it more difficult to provide police protection to our area.
- We have been told the current officer salary structure is above that for both Southwestern and Northern, so it may not be in the best interest of our officers to merge. This is an issue which must be addressed in the long term. There will be an opportunity to start that discussion given salary negotiations scheduled for next year.
- The original work performed by Chief Smeal indicated the department appeared to have one position too many. This was changed when the analysis utilized a 12-hour shift verses an 8-hour shift. The work presented by Chief Bentzel (using a 12-hour shift) also indicated the department was overstaffed by one position. If either analysis is correct, there may be an opportunity in the foreseeable future to restructure the department to better equate staff size with policing needs. Given natural turnover or retirements, this is not an unreasonable assumption.
- Northern Regional identified potential savings of \$173,126 (\$1,829,432 verses our budget of \$2,002,558). Initially, this would probably be the result of no longer needing two Chiefs of Police. Remember, our employee costs go beyond salary, and include benefits, training, supplies and other expenses. Given the previous bullet point, we feel the opportunity to look at the efficiency and structure of the department will be realized over the near term.
- We are concerned that a merger would not be cost free. The potential for a new "buy-in" fee is not feasible for Stewartstown at this time.

The hope the Borough Council is that we can work with our existing police department to increase its efficiency and productivity. During 2018, the opportunities may well present themselves to accomplish those goals. At some point, consolidation may become a solution, but we feel this is not the time.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert C. Herzberger".

Robert C. Herzberger
Mayor of Stewartstown