

The regular meeting of the **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE** for February 2021 was held tonight via web-conference, Chairman Brockington presiding. Members present were Commissioners Areman, Holland, Pransky, Rappoport, and Zygmund-Felt and Ex-Officio member Norris.

Staff present via web-conference were: Robert Zienkowski, Township Manager; Alyson Elliott, Assistant Township Manager; John Frye, Chief of Police; Scott Lynch, Fire Marshal and Kenneth Hellendall; Director EMS and Emergency Management Coordinator. Also present was Joseph Bagley, Esq., Township Solicitor.

Mr. Bagley announced that the Board of Commissioners met in Executive Session prior to tonight's meeting to discuss personnel matters and potential litigation which if discussed in public would violate a lawful privilege.

Mr. Brockington called the meeting of the Public Safety Committee to order at 7:45 p.m.

1. **Presentation of Community Service Awards**

Target employee Mark Collazo was presented with a Community Service award for extinguishing a fire on December 3, 2020 at the Target at 2450 Shoppers Lane. Mr. Collazo discovered a rack of clothing deliberately set on fire, used a fire extinguisher to put it out, and immediately dragged the rack to the back of the store and put it into a bin and filled it with water. His fast actions saved the store from a lot of damage and protected the shoppers from injury.

2. **Report of the Police Chief**

A. Chief Frye reviewed the Police Clearance and Juvenile Clearance Reports for the month of December 2020.

Mr. Brockington inquired why retail theft was down from 2019 to 2020. Chief Frye stated that COVID had a lot to do with the number of reports. He suspected that stores are limiting contact for the safety of their security personnel.

B. **Recommendation to the Board of Commissioners:** Upon motion of Mr. Norris, the Committee unanimously recommended the Board of Commissioners adopt an Ordinance amending Chapter 285, Vehicles and Traffic, Section 285-43, "Street and Parking Regulations" of the Township Code to amend traffic regulations and install a Handicapped Parking spot in front of 1811 Chelsea Road at its regularly-scheduled meeting on March 17, 2021.

C. **Recommendation to the Board of Commissioners:** Upon motion of Mr. Norris, the Committee unanimously recommended that the Board of Commissioners authorize advertisement of its intention to consider the adoption of the aforementioned Ordinance amending Chapter 285, Vehicles and Traffic at its regularly scheduled meeting on March 17, 2021.

Mr. Areman heard from neighbors regarding un-shoveled sidewalks. Chief Frye said the Ordinance requires sidewalks to be cleared 24 hours after the storm ends. Officers issue warnings first, and if the sidewalk is not cleared in 24 hours, a citation is issued.

Mr. Brockington suggested residents reach out to their Commissioner, who will address it with Chief. Mr. Pransky said residents should provide an address to police; it is not their job to drive around to see who hasn't shoveled. Mr. Norris asked neighbors to help neighbors who are unable to shovel.

Mr. Holland stated that it is counterproductive to have residents call 911 to report un-shoveled sidewalks. He does not believe it to be an appropriate use of Township resources for the Police to follow up on the complaints. He suggested that perhaps Code Enforcement can write the citations.

Chief Frye has been trying to address this for a number of years as it would free up the Police Department. Mr. Zygmund-Felt asked how chronic abusers are handled. Chief Frye said each incident is handled as a new one. Mr. Zienkowski will discuss snow removal further in his report.

Mr. Pransky asked about processes and procedures for the parking problem at Enterprise Auto in La Mott where cars are left on the street and residents are not able to park. He inquired about whether permit parking would be appropriate. Chief Frye stated they can discuss how to get the process started offline.

Mr. Brockington thanked Mr. Clewell and the Public Works Department for their hard work at Kerlin Farms, as they have a bad habit of not shoveling. With kids going back to school, it is important to have the sidewalk shoveled.

Upon motion of Mr. Norris, the Committee unanimously received the Report of the Police Chief.

3. **Report of the Fire Marshal**

- A. Fire Marshal Scott Lynch presented the fire report for the month of December 2020 and the minutes of the Fire Board Meeting from January 7, 2021.

Mr. Zygmund-Felt asked why there are seven years of call summaries. The variation from 2013-2020 is about 30% and there have been questions about the accuracy of these reports. They look consistent and he wanted to know if there is any reason to be called to question. Mr. Lynch said no.

Upon motion of Mr. Norris, the Committee unanimously received the report of the Fire Marshal and the Fire Board Minutes.

- B. **Recommendation to the Board of Commissioners:** Upon motion of Mr. Norris, the committee with a 6-0-1 vote approved the Ratification of the Board of Commissioners' decision to no longer recognize Ogontz Fire Company as an operating fire protection entity of the Township, effective December 16, 2020 (Ayes: Norris, Brockington, Holland, Zygmund-Felt, Areman, Pransky; Abstained: Rappoport).

Mr. Bagley stated that the Township received a complaint from Ogontz Fire Company and he has recommended to the Commissioners that as a result of litigation, they not comment on the Ogontz Fire Company or anything to do with the complaint.

- C. **Recommendation to the Board of Commissioners:** Upon motion of Mr. Norris, the committee with a 6-0-1 vote recommended the Board of Commissioners authorize advertisement of its intention to consider the adoption of an Ordinance amending Chapter 22 of the Township Code entitled "Fire Department", Article I entitled "Establishment and Organization", Section 1 entitled "Establishment of Fire Department" in order to consolidate Fire District No. 5 into other Fire Districts with edits from Mr. Bagley and making other incidental amendments thereto at its regularly-scheduled meeting on March 17, 2021 (Ayes: Norris, Brockington, Holland, Zygmund-Felt, Areman, Pransky; Abstained: Rappoport).

- D. **Recommendation to the Board of Commissioners:** Upon motion of Mr. Norris, the committee with a 6-0-1 vote recommended the Board of Commissioners adopt the aforementioned Ordinance at its regularly-scheduled meeting on March 17, 2021 (Ayes: Norris, Brockington, Holland, Zygmund-Felt, Areman, Pransky; Abstained: Rappoport).

4. **Report of the EMS Director**

Mr. Hellendall noted that all full and part-time employees have received both of their COVID-19 vaccines. Overall, COVID cases are going down, but the hospitals are seeing patients being brought in for other reasons and testing positive for COVID.

Mr. Hellendall added there is a Request for Proposal to outsource ambulance billing and he has received a lot of inquiries. He is planning to have a recommendation to present at next month's Public Safety meeting.

Mr. Brockington asked when police and fire personnel to receive their vaccinations. Mr. Hellendall stated that most of the police and fire department personnel have been vaccinated, either by going to other counties, or through Montgomery County and Einstein Hospital in Elkins Park. Within emergency services, anyone who wanted a shot has already received their first and/or second dose.

Mr. Norris said he received a number of calls from senior citizens regarding ambulance services now that Ogontz is decertified and wanted to clarify that services are not affected. Mr. Hellendall stated that EMS is part of the Township, separate from the Fire Department, and services have not been affected.

Mr. Zygmund-Felt asked if a protocol is in place to keep everyone safe if an EMS employee declines or refuses to immunize. Mr. Hellendall is working on a revised policy manual for the entire Township due to changes in our knowledge about COVID and COVID policies. Anyone is allowed to refuse (no one in EMS has refused) and sign a form stating they understand it could endanger their health. Mr. Zygmund-Felt asked if an increased testing protocol will be in place if a group of folks declines. Mr. Hellendall stated there is not at this time, because both vaccines currently on the market do not prevent someone from getting and spreading COVID, but will just prevent more serious illness. All this is being reviewed, and Mr. Hellendall is looking to the CDC for guidance.

Mr. Zygmund-Felt inquired about EMS subscriptions and the increase this year. Mr. Hellendall stated was expecting a downturn because of COVID, but membership has been up this year, and EMS has received donations totaling over \$500.

5. **Report of the Emergency Management Coordinator**

Mr. Hellendall noted they have spent a lot of time answering questions mostly from senior citizens about the COVID vaccine. The County will be publicizing an 800-number so residents can call into the Health Department to get answers. Appointments cannot be made via this number; it is only to answer questions. There is a revised system coming for making appointments, and anyone who has already made an appointment will not need to make another one. The new system is being created because there has been some fraud with the vaccine.

Mr. Areman and Mr. Brockington noted that the County released the hotline today on their website.

Upon motion of Mr. Norris, the Committee unanimously received the report of the EMS Director & EMA Director.

6. **Report of the Township Manager:**

Mr. Zienkowski recognized the Public Works Department for the fine job they are doing with the streets during the snowstorms. He thanked and commended them for their hard work and the countless hours they put in.

Mr. Zienkowski mentioned neighborhoods where 50-75% of residents do not shovel. Chief Frye said that citations that go in front of District Court are dismissed each time. Some homeowners pay the citations issued by the Township, but they do not have any affect when dismissed at the District Court.

Mr. Areman said in addition to the ordinance, it is a neighborly thing to remove the snow from sidewalks and help neighbors who may not be able to shovel. With respect to enforcement, he is

concerned that some ordinances on the books are not being enforced. He would be happy to be part of a discussion to come up with more creative ways to address these issues.

Mr. Zienkowski asked Chris Clewell from Public Works to provide an update on the six solar stop signs and two solar crosswalk signs. The order was placed with Garden State Highway Products and should be in mid-March and will be installed once the snow melts.

Mr. Zienkowski asked Mr. Brockington if the Township should pursue the one-way street survey in the Village. Mr. Brockington said yes because it is an ongoing issue. Mr. Zienkowski said staff will put some costs together and present to the Committee next month.

Upon motion of Mr. Norris, the Committee unanimously received the Report of the Township Manager.

7. **Old Business:** None.

8. **New Business:** None.

9. **Citizens' Forum:**

Rhonda Isser noted there are posts on Facebook requesting people to help neighbors with shoveling; she would be happy to post on the other pages and put people in touch with someone to help.

Art Gordon commented on the Ogontz decertification. He said the reason for many angry calls is that the Company expects more of the Commissioners and Township employees, expects them to be leaders that other communities look to with respect. He stated the Township Manager had only been with the Township three months when the decision was made.

Mr. Gordon said that the Fire Marshal's report is incorrect. He stated that Ogontz finished the year with 359 calls vs. 484 calls noted on report, and does not know where that number came from. Station 5 (Ogontz) was not asked for votes at the January or February meeting of the Fire Board. Until this ordinance is changed, Station 5 is still empowered to have votes at Fire Board. He stated court action is a result of the Commissioners and staff refusal to discuss or revisit the decertification.

Mr. Bagley reiterated that litigation has been filed this week by Ogontz Fire Company and he recommended the Board not comment.

Theresa Camerota, 1112 Church Road, asked Chief Frye about the ATVs and drag racing over the weekend at Target. Chief Frye was not aware of the situation and asked if she contacted Police. She did not and Chief Frye said he would look into the situation and get back to her. She said she has a neighbor that rides ATVs and scooters around their house and into the woods. She said she had a friendly conversation with him and he is now aware of the rules.

There being no further business, upon motion of Mr. Norris, and unanimously approved by the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Robert Zienkowski
Township Manager

per Eileen Wass