

The regular meeting of the **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE** for October 2021 was held tonight via web-conference, Chairman Brockington presiding. Members present were Commissioners Areman, Holland, Rappoport, and Zygmund-Felt and Ex-Officio member Norris. Not present: Commissioner Pransky.

Staff present via web-conference were: Robert Zienkowski, Township Manager; Alyson Elliott, Assistant Township Manager; John Slavin, Police Patrol Lieutenant; Scott Lynch, Fire Marshal; and Kenneth Hellendall, Director EMS and Emergency Management Coordinator.

Mr. Norris announced the Board met in Executive Session twice prior to tonight's meeting to discuss personnel, potential litigation, potential purchase of real property, emergency preparedness and protection of public safety and matters which if discussed in public would violate a lawful privilege.

Mr. Brockington called the meeting of the Public Safety Committee to order at 7:35 p.m.

1. **Report of the Police Chief**

- A. Lt. Slavin reviewed the Police Clearance and Juvenile Clearance Reports for the month of August 2021.

Ms. Rappoport thanked Lt. Slavin for the patrol cars around Greenwood Avenue and hopes this will help calm traffic and reduce speeding in the area. Mr. Brockington asked what plans are in place for that area. Lt. Slavin said the Police Department is seeing heavy volume in this area especially during rush hour and they will take a proactive approach where there will be more Police presence during these times.

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

- B. Lt. Slavin announced several Police Commendations:
- Merit Citation to Detective Ryan Murray relating to an investigation and arrest of persons involved in illegal straw purchasing & sales of firearms.
 - Merit Citation to Detective Matthew Gonglik relating to an investigation and arrest of a person wanted for a series of burglaries & sexual assaults.
 - Unit Citation to Officer Stewart Coyle, Officer Mark Gindhart, Officer Kevin Smith, and Officer Brian Walsh for a Vehicle crash with entrapment.
 - Unit Citation to Detective Sergeant Richard Schaffer, Officer Christian Dobush, and Officer Chad Smith for a successful resolution with a suicidal subject.

Mr. Zygmund-Felt added two more recognitions: the quick arrest of the suspect in the stabbing at the Mr. Cigarette store last week and the recent carjacking & armed robbery arrest. He noted that resolutions of crimes do not always get communicated publicly and he would like to find a better way to do so. Mr. Norris concurred with Mr. Zygmund-Felt and added that this is what the Police Department does day in and day out and on behalf of the Commissioners, they could not be more proud of the Police Department and all the work they do to keep the community safe.

- C. Consider recommending approval of two purchase orders to CODY Systems, one in the amount of \$3,049.81 to renew the annual subscription for the 2020 year and one in the amount of \$3,855 to renew the annual subscription for the 2021 year.

Mr. Areman asked for clarification on the dates of these invoices. Lt. Slavin said the 2020 invoice was never received and the company realized it when they sent the 2021 invoice.

Upon motion of Mr. Norris, the Committee unanimously authorized two purchase orders for CODY Systems, one in the amount of \$3,049.81 to renew the annual subscription for the 2020 year and one in the amount of \$3,855 to renew the annual subscription for the 2021 year.

- D. Consider recommending approval of a purchase order for HAVIS in the amount of \$23,560 to upfit the five (5) 2021 Police vehicles.

Mr. Brockington asked Lt. Slavin to explain what “upfit” means. Lt. Slavin said that upfitting is where equipment from the old vehicle, such as radios, computers, bars for the windows, light bars, sirens & spotlights are switched to the new vehicle, where possible.

Upon the motion of Mr. Norris, the Committee unanimously authorized a purchase order for HAVIS in the amount of \$23,560 to upfit the five (5) 2021 Police vehicles.

- E. Lt. Slavin gave an update on the upcoming Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association Re-Accreditation that will take place on October 21. This re-accreditation happens every three (3) years and assessors review policies, procedures, ask Officers specific questions, take tours of the facility, and participate in ridealongs with Officers. Sgt. Jarreau Francis oversees this accreditation process and has done an amazing job in getting the Department ready.

- F. Cheltenham Township Police Department Recognitions:

- Detective Matt Hungerford was honored on October 7, 2021 by Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin Steele for his response to an active shooter at Wal-Mart on August 15, 2018, where multiple victims were shot. Detective Hungerford was first on scene and his actions set the tone for the scene. In January 2020, the actor was found guilty at trial.
- The Department received a thank you from Upper Dublin Township for Sgt. Joseph O’Neill’s assistance during Hurricane Ida.
- A thank you from Lower Merion Township Fire Department was received thanking the Police Department for its support during the funeral for a firefighter who was killed while on scene of an accident.
- Officer Dave Sparango was acknowledged by the Director of Quality and Education at Moss Rehab for his caring, skilled and effective interactions with a person in their hospital lobby.
- Officer Kevin O’Donnell was acknowledged by a Haverford resident who was traveling through Cheltenham Township with her son during Hurricane Ida. They ended up lost due to the detours and came upon Officer O’Donnell in his vehicle. Officer O’Donnell consulted computer maps to guide the mother and son to a route that would get them to an accessible entrance to the expressway, inquired on their fuel status, offered suggestions for local hotels should they be unsuccessful and helped guide them for a few blocks to assure they were safely able to drive through the few non-flooded roads that were open.

Mr. Brockington, on behalf of the Commissioners, expressed their appreciation to all of the Police Officers.

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

2. **Report of the Fire Marshal**

- A. Mr. Lynch presented the fire report for the month of August 2021 and said the Fire Board did not meet in September due to Hurricane Ida.
- B. Mr. Lynch provided an update on 515 Stahr Road stating the building has passed all inspections and has been re-occupied.

- C. Mr. Zygmund-Felt complimented Mr. Lynch on the very detailed description of outside aid and the quick response times. He request that he add fire company response times to outside the Township going forward. Mr. Zygmund-Felt mentioned representations being made by individuals outside of the four fire companies regarding performance and response times on fires in the center of the Township and would like to see a report next month on the deployment of firefighters and apparatus. The fire companies have represented the Township in both private and public meetings and the performance and interactions between them has never been better and that is reassuring to the public. Mr. Brockington asked going forward that Mr. Lynch acknowledge the fire companies when they go above and beyond.
- D. Mr. Lynch updated the Committee on false fire alarms and fire code enforcements; \$17,230 has been brought in this year in fines. Eighty percent of the fines will be returned to the fire companies and a new spreadsheet will be added to Fire reports beginning next month.
- E. Mr. Brockington asked for an update on the High School. Mr. Lynch said from 9/20/21-9/23/21 they were at the High School every day for malicious false alarms that involved ten (10) scholars. With assistance from Vice Principal, Dr. Hammond, these scholars were suspended and parents received citations, ranging from \$350-\$1000. Mr. Lynch went on to say that the wear & tear on the apparatus, fuel costs, lost wages, increase in firefighter injuries, and risk of accidents, cost the fire companies money. These are all volunteer firefighters who are leaving work to go on these calls. One of the incidents was a TikTok dare where the student pulled the fire alarm, turned around and smiled at the camera. Dr. Hammond is making sure there are consequences for these actions.
- F. Ms. Rappoport noted that there were a lot of calls for outside electrical fires and inside & outside smells of gas and asked if this was normal. Mr. Lynch said it is normal, as gas lines and water mains are being replaced throughout the Township and sometimes the lines are not marked correctly or the line is not where it should be and a gas line is struck. Wind and rain can cause the electrical fires outside and the fire companies secure the area, contact PECO and instruct the residents to stay away, before moving onto the next call. There are occasions where there are multiple calls for one location resulting in repeat calls.

Upon the motion of Mr. Norris, the Committee unanimously received the August 2021 report of the Fire Marshal.

3. **Report of the EMS Director**

- A. Mr. Hellendall presented the EMS reports for the month of August 2021.
- B. Mr. Hellendall updated the committee on the damaged ambulance, which was picked up, and said the replacement should arrive January 2022.
- C. Mr. Hellendall hopes to have two (2) full-time Paramedics on board by November 1, 2021 and said his staff has been outstanding and working long hours during the staffing shortage. EMS is still short-staffed, but bringing in two new full-timers will be a huge help.
- D. Mr. Hellendall said the new billing company will handle the annual EMS Subscription Mailer which will begin soon.

Mr. Norris noticed the billings year-to-date is down from last year. Mr. Hellendall said the Medicare money was credited to the wrong Township account and Mr. Crittendon said it has been corrected as of October 1.

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

4. **Report of the EMA Director**

- A. Mr. Hellendall presented the EMA reports for the month of August 2021.
- B. Mr. Hellendall passed along thanks from across the County to the Police Department, Public Works, Fire Department & EMS during the pandemic and everyone should be proud of the teamwork between all townships.
- C. Mr. Hellendall is working on getting a new sign board and light tower for the Township from the County.

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

5. **Old Business**

- A. Mr. Areman announced that the Limekiln Bridge is almost complete, but there may be a couple evening closures the week of October 18.

6. **New Business:** None.

7. **Citizens' Forum:**

Liza Meiris: spoke about the pulling of the fire alarm at the high school and understands the idea of holding students accountable, but wants everyone to remember that kids are just going back to school and to keep in mind mental health issues that arose due to the pandemic. She is concerned that the fines can affect families in a negative way.

Jonathan Essoka: discussed the following issues happening in Ward 2 that are safety hazards and disrupting the quality of life:

- Drivers doing donuts in the High School parking lot at night. He said he and his neighbors would like to see more police presence, fining drivers, speed humps, adding poles & chains to the entrances, and adding a substance to the parking lot to deter this activity. Mr. Brockington said this will need to be brought up with the School District since it is their property. Mr. Zienkowski advised residents to call 911 when this happens.
- Excessive speeding on Rices Mill Road and that portable signs are helpful, but would ask for a Traffic Calming Study. This is happening after 3 p.m. during the day. Lt. Slavin has been asked to look into this.
- Speeding buses on Old Farm Road and is asking Police to speak to the drivers. Mr. Zienkowski said this has been discussed during a recent School Liaison Meeting and the Police Department has been directed to ticket the speeding buses.
- There is a car carrier parked on Old Mill Road and he believes it is a Class 3 vehicle that should not be parked there. Lt. Slavin will look into this.

Bruce Johnson: reiterated Mr. Essoka's concerns and added the following:

- Lights need to be added in the back parking lot to deter illegal activities. Mr. Brockington noted that the School District would be responsible for adding lights.
- There are Do Not Enter signs on Longfellow Road & Old Mill Road that are not being followed. Drivers are using Longfellow Road to get to 309. Lt. Slavin will look into it.
- If a drug free school zone sign can be added on Old Mill Road, as there are kids walking to school smoking marijuana while small children are waiting for the school bus.

Joe Augustine: discussed the recent accident on Church Road & Greenwood Avenue and the ongoing discussion with PennDOT. He specifically wanted to talk about egress his driveway onto Greenwood Avenue. He reviewed sight distances, posted speed limits and PennDOT's criteria on all. He is asking that the speed limit be enforced, and that consideration be given to installing a stop sign at Hedgerow Lane & Greenwood Avenue. Discussion continued regarding speeding, ticketing and issues with the proposed PennDOT Traffic study. Linda Wright Moore and Theresa Camerota added to the discussion and expressed their concern that PennDOT will not address the issues. Lt. Slavin said there will be a multi-prong approach utilizing unmanned vehicles, speed radar signs and Police presence in this area. Mr. Holland said this is a start and that is interested to see if this approach works.

Emily Steinberg: asked if the School District is responsible for policing its parking lot. Lt. Slavin said no, but repairs and improvements are the responsibility of the School District. Ms. Steinberg is requesting regular patrols in that area. Regarding Church Road and Greenwood Avenue, residents received a letter from PennDOT notifying them that trucks cannot be prohibited from Church Road and Greenwood Avenue. She does not feel that this answers their concerns and wants to push PennDOT to find ways to deal with traffic and trucks in this area. She would like to have another discussion on the PennDOT responses to the resident questions.

Ali Wilson: asked for help regarding noise and bright lights at SoFive Soccer Center (46 Church Road) late into the night. The permit for the leagues allows them to play until 10 p.m. each night, but partying is going on after and drivers are doing donuts in the parking lot. It is frustrating to the neighbors and interfering with their quality of life. Ms. Wilson shared her screen and played a few videos of what she hears and sees from about 7:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. each night. As Ms. Wilson was speaking, the noise could be heard in the background; this was around 9 p.m.

Mr. Zygmund-Felt said a meeting was held last week with senior ownership of SoFive who flew in from California, Lt. Slavin, Al Sergio, and Commissioners Brockington and Zygmund-Felt. The issues of excessive noise during and after play, parking lot disturbances and the use of the lot for celebration and unauthorized after hours use and the lighting streaming into homes were addressed. They claim they have brought in private security, expanded their camera network, which tracks noise by decibel level, and will add filters or refocus the lights. The Commissioners asked SoFive to give a specific commitment to do this across the board until there is a steady level of reduction.

Ms. Wilson is asking that the hours of operation during the week end at 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. on the weekends. Kimberly Rackley, Eben Wilson and Ms. Rappoport added to the discussion stating it is not just a few residents with concerns and that this is interfering with daily living. There should be sight and sound barriers erected on Church Road and noise should not exceed 55 decibels.

Edie Cerebi: voiced her appreciation for what the Police Department, Fire & EMS do every day and the patience of the Commissioners. She also asked why there was no video for the September Public Safety, Public Affairs and Finance Committee posted to the website. Mr. Zygmund-Felt said there were technical problems due to the storm and Mr. Zienkowski said he would look into it and see if it can be posted.

8. There being no further business, upon motion of Mr. Brockington, and unanimously approved by the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.



Robert Zienkowski
Township Manager

per Eileen Wass