

MILFORD CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 10, 2016

A Meeting of the City of Milford Police Committee was held in the Joseph Ronnie Rogers Council Chambers at Milford City Hall, 201 South Walnut Street, Milford, Delaware on Wednesday, February 10, 2016.

PRESIDING: Chairman Douglas Morrow

IN ATTENDANCE: Mayor Bryan Shupe

Committee Members:
Councilman James Burk and Councilwoman Katrina Wilson

Councilman Owen Brooks Jr.

City Manager Eric Norenberg & Deputy City Clerk Christine Crouch

Chairman Morrow called the Committee Meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Councilman Owen Brooks was also in attendance.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Wilson moved to go into Executive Session reference below matter, seconded by Mr. Burk:

*{Pursuant to 29 Del. C. §10004(b)(9)} (Police Personnel Matters)
Officer Qualifications & Position Duty Change*

Motion carried.

Chairman Morrow recessed the Council Meeting at 5:33 p.m. for the purpose of an Executive Session as permitted by Delaware's Freedom of Information Act.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

The Police Committee returned to Open Session at 5:43 p.m.

Officer Qualifications

No action required.

No discussion on second item.

Police Personnel Matters/Consideration of Additional Officers

Mr. Morrow recalled at the December Special Council meeting, Mr. Brooks asked that council consider hiring four additional police officers. At that time, Mayor Shupe assigned the matter to the police committee and this meeting has been called to discuss that issue.

Mr. Morrow has since followed up with the finance director to obtain some related budgetary numbers. He reported that the starting wage is \$45,500; adding in the health insurance, pension, payroll benefits, etc. totals \$85,000. He reminded the committee members that a one-cent property tax increase equals \$80,000.

He reported that to hiring four additional officers would require a four-cent tax increase.

Mr. Morrow feels that before this can be considered, a financial plan is needed. He also recommends that during this

discussion, the new police building also be considered. He said the current station is overcrowded and he does not believe four additional officers will make that situation much worse.

Mr. Brooks said the reason he recommended four is because that adds one to each shift and they are only working one shift at a time. The reason he said four is because the department has four shifts. To work shift work, he said that they need four shifts.

Mr. Morrow explained that he is just presenting what is needed should the four officers be approved.

He also believes that we are on the right path with the new negotiating team and hopes the police contract issues will be resolved over the next few meetings scheduled with the teamsters.

Mr. Brooks stated that if we hired them in a month, it should not be hard on this budget because Dion his son retired at the start of the budget and his seat was never filled and three others retired and three others left so there should be a lot of money in the pot.

Mr. Morrow asked the city manager to get up with the finance director to determine how much money is left in the budget. Mr. Burk recommends Mr. Norenberg look into the budget and see what other opportunities are available. He informed the committee member that this was the first year he was involved in the budget and he observed a lot of unutilized budgeted items last year. He feels we need to figure out what we have and what is not being spent. That way, we can use that money and not raise taxes as much.

Mr. Burk commented that the officers that were promoted had twenty plus years of service and asked what sort of path to retirement they are looking at. He does not want to push anyone out but feels that Chief Brown knows his team better than anyone else, adding that those officers are higher-end employees.

Chief Brown stated that all of those officers are eligible to retire; however, none have immediate plans to retire. Only one officer had even mentioned the possibility though he agreed to stay for a while and he believes he will stay for a few more years.

Mayor Shupe suggests finding some steps to get to that goal. He recalled the first thing that Chief Brown said he wanted to do was to fill the current vacancies. He feels that is important and emphasized its importance.

They mayor stated that the chief has the authority to hire and he should do that. After that, he recommends that an assessment of the police department be done that includes all thirty* officers showing the areas we are doing well in, those we lack and any needs.

The mayor said when he discussed this with Mr. Morrow earlier today, they discussed possibly finding federal or state money to help fund that assessment project. He feels this is not only a challenge now, but Milford is going to continue to grow over the next ten plus years. He wants to know how the department should be set up so we can determine throughout that period of time how many officers are needed.

Mayor Shupe definitely agrees that as Milford grows, more officers are needed. But an assessment from Chief Brown and a law enforcement professional can provide empirical evidence by determining the number of officers that are needed.

Mr. Morrow feels that needs to be taken one step further. He referenced the new Bayhealth campus that will have a tremendous impact on this community. He said that in addition to bringing a lot people into the community, there will be an increase in jobs in both the medical and professional fields. He feels we can get more bang for our buck if an overall city assessment is done. He suggests they look at utilities, public works, billing, parks and recreation, etc.

Mr. Morrow said perhaps we are understaffed in some areas and overstaffed in other departments though he doubts that is the case. But it would be worth finding some additional moneys if that were done throughout the city.

He predicts the process will be a six to nine-month process. If council decides to go with a citywide assessment, there is

a need to find grant money. He recalled studies that were done in the past that cost the taxpayers \$40,000 or \$50,000 and nothing was ever implemented. He remembers a lot of money being wasted on studies in the past.

Mr. Morrow agrees that if we do an assessment, he highly recommends all departments be included. Mayor Shupe then pointed out the assessment could say that we need more officers.

Mr. Brooks said someone is always talking about needing officers in the parks and downtown. Someone always says we need officers to walk through there to make sure everyone is safe. He continued by saying people want to use the parks and need to feel safe. Someone walking downtown in the dark needs to see at least a police officer ride by.

Mr. Brooks said that he feels safe everywhere in Milford even though his son, who was a police officer, tells him he cannot do some of the things that he does. He added that his son told him that Mr. Brooks is not even safe at the little league ballpark.

Mr. Burk said now that Chief Brown has promoted the officers, he suggests his organizational chart be reviewed and determine who is in CI, patrol and administration. He can then develop his bullpen and prepare for retirement. He said people work their whole lives to retire and that is what people want to do.

Mr. Burk stated that we also want to facilitate community policing and more patrol will be needed. He agrees that Chief Brown should be the one to figure out who is where on his team.

He agrees with everyone that we will see a lot of future growth and that homes will be selling which will result in an increase in transfer taxes. However, that is not happening right now because the shovel is not in the ground. He feels it is important to simply get the department from where it is today to where it should be to accommodate the growth of the town and how we are going to pay for needed increases in staffing.

Mayor Shupe said the reason he brought up the assessment is to be proactive as we move forward with the growth of this town. He does not want to all of a sudden realize we do not have enough police officers which could potentially create a crime wave or cause other things to happen because our department can no longer handle such situations.

Mr. Morrow referenced the Ben Muldrow's study and presentation that was paid by grant money. He believes funding should be sought so that we can assess all sides in order to be prepared. Utilities, streets, sewer and police all need to be assessed. He said that perhaps the University of Delaware or a similar entity should be contacted. He noted that Chief Brown has connections with the IACP (police chiefs' organization) who oversees this type of study.

Mr. Burk noted that the Attorney General's office just received a huge allotment of money that they are throwing at different cities throughout the state. Mr. Morrow suggests Chief Brown review that, along with the city manager.

Mr. Morrow feels we need to be ahead of the curb and ready citywide when this development begins. Training police officers takes about a year and Chief Brown agreed.

Mr. Morrow asked how many more officers are needed to be fully staffed; Chief Brown stated two more officers will give them a full complement of officers.

Ms. Wilson stated that everything that is being said is all good, but she goes back to what Mayor Shupe said that the department needs to be fully staffed before anything else is considered.

Chief Brown stated that for clarification, there are thirty-two officers when fully staffed of which two were added as school-funded officers.

Ms. Wilson reiterated the need to get up to thirty-two officers; then Chief Brown should look at what they need once that is accomplished. She said crime has increased everywhere and referenced the complaints that occur at Walmart alone. Mr. Brooks said crime is really bad.

Mr. Burk pointed out that when comparing monthly police reports, the numbers are lower. He asked how crime is going up if our numbers are lower. He asked how that is happening though he saw where felonies were up slightly though he hears from people that crime numbers are high.

Mr. Brooks said that what bothers him is if a gang comes into City of Milford at three o'clock in the morning, all they have to do is fake an accident in one place and then in another place. All of a sudden every police officer is tied up and nobody in the center of Milford.

Ms. Wilson said people realize that and they also know how many officers we have on duty. She thinks it is already a crisis that we do not have enough officers. She emphasized the need to jump on this as soon as possible. She knows some people feel it is important to hire an expert, but she is not one for paying all that money to get some firm to come to Milford only to tell us what we already know we need to do.

Mr. Morrow agrees we already know and most of our residents know.

Ms. Wilson does not really want to pay a firm \$50,000 for them to show council another PowerPoint presentation.

Mayor Shupe said that is why he suggested looking at some other sources. With the downtown plan, the city received \$24,000; the total cost was \$27,000 so the city only had to pay \$3,000. Mayor Shupe said their information will be important as he and council try to sell the plan to increase the number of officers which will involve a tax increase. An assessment will give him and Chief Brown the empirical evidence needed through the information by the third party.

The mayor said that unfortunately this will have to be sold to the public. Everyone in this room understands but most of the public does not.

Mr. Brooks said all the people have asked him for many years why four officers were hired; he explained to them about the four shifts and that only one went on a shift. Then they understand that we are not putting four out there.

Mr. Morrow recalled when Biden was still a senator and there was funding available through the federal and state governments to pay for an officer for a few years. The last four officers were added more than ten years ago. Going back to the time when Dick Carmean was chief thirty years ago, the number stayed the same until the four officers were hired.

City Manager Norenberg is familiar with a few organizations that do these type of studies. One is the Center for Public Safety Management that spun off from ICMA (City Managers Association) and is based in Washington DC and a partner of IACP. They do this type of consulting for both police and fire. Also the Novak Consulting Group that handled the recruitment for the city manager position has done this type of consulting. He said they were hired before the chief's position in Oberlin was filled a year ago. He said they really dug into the department's data and both organizations are similar in that they ask for data from the previous years, analyze the numbers and return and start meeting with city council and any other focus group council feels should have a voice.

They provided the new Oberlin chief with a roadmap of what needed to be improved on. But to the mayor's point, Mr. Norenberg agreed the end result will be a tax increase but we will have the backup data from an expert and not a group of administrators and council members. Instead we have someone else who has crunched the numbers and has looked at trends and understands what and why something is needed. This makes it much easier for council to explain in his opinion.

He said the study done in Oberlin was approximately \$30,000 to \$35,000 and took about seven or eight months.

The city manager said he can work with Chief Brown to try and explore some possible funding sources. If they find some, they can then start looking at requests for proposals.

Mr. Morrow said it would definitely need to be paid through a grant of sort; Mr. Brooks agreed adding that we should build the new police station with a grant. He said that Smyrna got a new nice one for \$8 million.

Mr. Morrow advised there is \$50,000 in escrow for the Growmark property which is located across from the current police

station. When he discussed the matter with Mr. Portmann last month, he learned that the agreement was never returned from Growmark. He would like to have an answer about whether or not they are willing to sell the property so we can move forward.

Mr. Norenberg reported that our solicitor is trying to track down the agreement which might be in a box of an attorney who is in process of retiring. He feels we may need to start that process all over again because it was never fully executed. That will either give the city an out should we change our mind, or extend the period in which a final decision must be made.

Mr. Morrow believes the three-year period has not started because it was never executed. He would hate to see that property be purchase by someone else considering there was so much time and effort that went into selecting an appropriate site. He recalled the number of days they drove around to find a suitable site. The first selection was in Independence Commons though the city manager later installed solar panels on the rear of the parcel. That would have saved the cost of buying the land, save on stormwater management and infrastructure such as roads. As a result, this remained the only viable property available. Mr. Morrow emphasized that there is a huge advantage considering it is in the downtown where a lot of things are happening.

Mr. Brooks agrees it is a lot of land and one of the best locations. The location of the current department requires sandbags anytime there is a big storm; if not, the rainwater enters the basement of the police station as has occurred on many occasions.

Mayor Shupe recalled the discussions about the armory being used for a police department. In his opinion, it would be extremely challenging to get what is required for an up-to-date police department into that building. He asked if there has been any thoughts about demolishing the armory and building a new police station on top of that property.

Mr. Brooks feels that the state legislators may not allow that.

Mayor Shupe then asked what the school will do with the middle school; Mr. Burk said he is going to a meeting tonight about the reuse of the middle school. The mayor feels that may be an option that could work.

Mr. Morrow explained that was one of many options that was considered; Ms. Wilson said council had asked the school at one point and their answer was no; Mr. Morrow agreed because it had to be offered to state agencies first.

Mayor Shupe said that for this to work, the middle school would have to be taken down and something new built because of the numerous challenges with that building. He would not recommend putting the police department inside the current facility because of that. However, if that building were demolished, we could potentially build a new police station on the land. He pointed out he is only throwing out ideas and nothing concrete.

Mr. Brooks questioned the residential location. He asked Chief Brown if when police officers get in their vehicles to leave, do they blow their sirens. Chief Brown explained that they do particularly in an emergency situation.

Mr. Burk said he could care less as a neighbor. He understands he would be right across from the department and they can blow their sirens as long and loud as they want.

Mr. Brooks asked if he would be ok with that occurring all night; Mr. Burk said to bring it. He noted there are ambulances running through there constantly to the hospital in addition to helicopters going and coming all the time.

Mr. Burk then informed the committee that Middletown has two locations. They have a main department and a satellite. That may be more cost effective. When they are building a new one, they could use the old station. Then could then have two locations and strategically locate them in relation to response time.

He understands that Middletown is a different animal than Milford and has a lot more money.

Mr. Morrow reiterated that is why the Growmark property is attractive. They could still utilize the current station possibly for community policing.

Mr. Burk said he will be happy to report back on what the school says about the building because he will be attending that meeting as soon as this meeting adjourns.

Mr. Morrow then asked the city manager and Chief Brown to begin looking at possible funding mechanisms. As he stated, he wants the entire city included because the growth that is coming. He was here during the last boom and he and Mr. Brooks both concur that the city was fortunate to have those four officers beforehand.

Mr. Brooks agreed adding that he also asked for four officers at that time.

Mr. Morrow said we also need to check out the property, look at other options and see what the school has to say. In reality, a new police station would take three years once we get started. Mr. Brooks believes it will take that long to build and put all the electronics in it.

Mr. Morrow agreed that is a referendum/tax increase issue.

Ms. Wilson stressed that this is one thing she feels the citizens in Milford would have no problem approving. Mayor Shupe feels it is a good thing that it has to go to referendum so that the residents can make the decision instead of council. It would also make them feel like they are part of the decision making.

It was agreed that eventually, the city will make use of the armory. Mr. Morrow does not believe it is large enough for a police station. In addition, it is landlocked with only one way in and one way out which is not what is recommended for today's facilities.

Mayor Shupe suggests reporting back to the school to determine if they are willing to demo it. He believes they will have to explain what we plan to do before we can officially ask for it. Mr. Burk does not believe the school knows what they are doing with it.

Ms. Wilson recalled that money is an issue. Mr. Morrow agreed noting that it was going to cost almost \$2 million to demo the building. Mayor Shupe said if he were them, he would just demo the building and stop all the conversation about it.

Mr. Brooks said the conversation he got from one school official was if they tore the building down and built a new school there, would be a whole lot cheaper than buying the Simpson property.

Mayor Shupe said one of the concerns is that could work right now, but not in another five or ten years. At that point, they would have to go back out for another referendum. One of the big problems is the site is landlocked and the reason they chose the Simpson Farm. He emphasized that we do not want to put ourselves in that same position because that is one of the problems with their current site.

He stated that even if a smaller station is built initially, we need enough land to be able to add onto it in future years. The only way that can be accomplished is having enough land to allow that.

They mayor commented that the reason the Growmark property is so attractive is because there is more room than for just the building itself.

Mr. Brooks reported that a lot of people wanted the school on the McColley property because it was connected to the school. The boys and girls playing sports were already there and didn't need to be transferred to the Simpson Farm.

Ms. Wilson recalled the price of the McColley property was much higher than the school could afford; Mayor Shupe agreed especially when compared to the appraisal.

Mr. Burk then asked Chief Brown if there is anyway they can get the data off the blinking speed limit signs because he know it tracks them. He asked if it will record high and low times of when people are speeding; he feels the police department could use that data.

Mr. Burk said he always hears from his constituents that people are driving too fast. He said that hard numbers would help the officers know where to go and could possibly increase revenues for the city as well.

He asked if Chief Brown could look into adding a bluetooth or similar device. He said he would love to have one in his ward because they really seem to help. He referred to the one on South Walnut Street that has really seemed to slow people down.

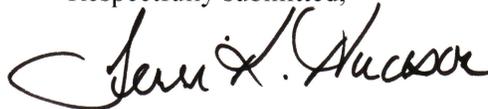
Mr. Burk said there is one on Kings Highway which he appreciates because people fly down that street. Chief Brown reported there are permanent ones on Tenth Street, South Walnut, Southeast Second and one was just delivered that will be installed on Southeast Front Street.

Mr. Burk said there is a terrible speeding problem; Mr. Brooks agreed there is speeding all over town. He said when someone asks him where a police officer is, he tells them they can't be everywhere at once and have a lot of other duties.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the Police Committee Meeting adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Terri K. Hudson, MMC
City Clerk/Recorder

*Correct number of MPD Officers Authorized 32 (2 SRO's paid by MSD)