

MILFORD CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
June 27, 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 Monday, June 27, 2016.

PRESIDING: Chairman James Burk

IN ATTENDANCE: Committee Members:
Councilmember Owen Brooks Jr.

Mayor Bryan Shupe

City Manager Eric Norenberg & City Clerk Terri Hudson

Chairman Burk called the Committee Meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.

He advised that the reason he called this meeting was to discuss the \$95,000 allotted in the new budget for the analysis and study of the police department operations. He has been thinking about this and recalled a few years ago, a facilities' analysis was completed at a cost of \$50,000.

Chairman Burk then asked if there are multiple vendors being considered and referenced the amount and requirement for public bidding. He also wants Chief Brown to inform the Committee of his wants and needs for the study.

Mr. Brooks recalled that Architect Alvin French of French and Ryan had come before Council on multiple occasions and had done a considerable amount of work on the project. He recalled the rendering and plans that were reviewed by Council for the proposed police station. What was designed would meet the department's needs for many years, and because the sites chosen were not landlocked, there was an ability to expand as well.

Chief Brown confirmed he has the actual blueprints in addition to providing the City Manager a copy as was requested.

The chairman expressed some concerns with the current police department and recalled a recent incident where a suspect was being held in the holding area and attempted to escape through the ventilation system. He also recalled another suspect who had attempted suicide in the cell. These incidents can all be attributed to the current layout and lack of safety features in the building and proof there is a definite need for updates.

Chairman Burk also pointed out that he talked with the previous Chief about the deficiencies at the current station which prevents the department from starting the accreditation process.

He wants to hear from Chief Brown their needs and feels his police officers are the ones that understand what is needed. He wants to be proactive moving forward.

Chief Brown reported that five to six years ago, French and Ryan worked on the feasibility study with Redstone Architects, who are specialists in law enforcement design, and came up with a building plan. They worked with Chief Hudson and the staff at the time who put a lot of time and effort into the plan. Therefore, he does not understand the purpose of the study.

Mr. Burk recalled that during the budget hearings, the City Manager talked about staffing needs which he believes are included in the study.

Mr. Norenberg said he received a two-page executive summary though he hopes there is more to the study. He agrees that we do not need to rehash what can be used. The conversation he said he has had with a few people, including Chief Brown, is the need to look at the operations of the department currently, and what is projected over the next few years as the community grows and key facilities like Bayhealth come on line. He feels that decisions need to be made regarding staff and operations based on data rather than someone just saying 'hey we need to add four new officers' which has been said though he has not seen any facts that substantiate that need when it comes before the community or political leadership.

Mr. Norenberg recommends the operations study be done first. He pointed out that Mr. Burk mentioned accreditation and he agrees we need to shoot for that in the future though most of these studies make that the ultimate goal. If the CALEA standards are what the department should be shooting for, he would like to know how close the department is to that and the deficiencies are in that facility which will help decide whether to replace the facility and where to expect to grow in terms of staffing and other demands such as evidence, holding cells, etc.

The City Manager said that when he looked over the floor plans a few weeks ago, the Chief felt there were some things that may be done differently in terms of the plan though he agrees the current department leadership, meaning the Chief, Captain and Lieutenants, should be the main focus.

He pointed out there is a need to convince the community to support this. He said we need to move forward with a thoughtful, methodical approach to understanding how and why a new station is needed.

Mr. Brooks said he was the one that suggested adding four new police officers. He feels that is a result of the amount of vacation and leave each officer gets, in addition to overtime that is being paid. He feels that hiring new officers will save overall because less overtime would be paid. He believes strongly that four new officers are justified based on the new hospital and the constant need for police and feels they could deter some of the behavior that is occurring downtown with people loitering in that area. He noted there is some brazen activity occurring in the Bicentennial Park.

Mr. Brooks then asked how Chief Brown has determined his staffing though he does not remember any analysis being needed.

Chief Brown explained there are four officers on a shift, two detectives though three are needed. He hopes to fill that third detective slot when the 32nd officer is hired. That will provide two shifts of five officers and two shifts of four officers. However, they may move one because they have the two canine officers who can fill in during the busier times.

Mr. Brooks asked how much vacation each of the four or five officers on a shift have; Chief Brown believes that most of the road officers are newer and on average is probably in the three-week range. Mr. Brooks said that is fifteen weeks per shift so he does not think that would be a problem. Therefore, he feels those four officers are not needed for the reason he stated.

Chief Brown said one of the benefits of having a lot of new officers is that they have not yet earned the maximum number of vacation hours. However, there are other reasons an officer is off which includes court time, training, etc. That is all time that must be given back which means time off.

Mr. Brooks said his concern is when an accident occurs in one part of town and another incident occurs at the same time. Then all of a sudden there are no police in town because they are at these other two complaints.

Mr. Burk asked which company the City Manager was planning to use and referenced the \$95,000 that was budgeted and asked if a quote was already obtained. Mr. Norenberg explained a similar study is being done by the City of Dover and he reduced their budgeted number at the high end. He is also familiar with a couple of nonprofits, including the Center for Public Safety Management and the IACP, who do these studies, though he has not been able to find a copy of their produced reports though many are on the individual city websites.

In addition, there are private consulting and recruiting firms that do municipal government management. The City Manager continued by stating that he pulled a few examples of fees that can be put together and customized. He is willing to work with Chief Brown on that before the scope is run past the Police Committee within a few weeks.

Mr. Burk stated that he prefers Chief Brown take the lead on this and asked the City Manager to send the Chief whatever he has obtained. He explained it is his department and the way the City is structured, he prefers the Police Committee and the Chief figure out the RFP. He feels that is the duty of the police Police Committee and added that Chief Brown reports to Council and wants to make sure that is clear. In that manner, the department will get what they need though he welcomes any input the City Manager can provide.

The chairman asked Chief Brown what he would like to get from this study; Chief Brown said he is unprepared to answer that because his impression was this study was already completed and did not expect another one to be done. He knew nothing about this study until it was presented at a Council meeting.

Mr. Burk recalled that it was included in the budget though he would like to have another meeting at which time he wants Councilwoman Wilson's input especially with her years of experience on this Committee. He feels that once we are all on the same page, we can move forward.

He then emphasized that the new police station will not be built anytime soon and there is a long process involved. Mr. Burk said the money was spent on the study and he does not want to redo that. A recommendation was made by Council and right now it is a plan though we can consider any new wants and needs.

Chief Brown said that after discussing this with Chief Hudson today, he found a lot of the documents, including a large file of surveys, that were completed by Police Officers and City Officials. It was confirmed that the study began in early 2010 and completed in 2011.

Mayor Shupe feels that the new study can be structured in a way to sell the police department. He said it is no secret Milford will continue to grow and more officers will be needed. It is obvious a new police station is needed and this will provide the proof that the new officers and a new station are needed.

Mr. Burk said he has been in the police station and knows there are definite needs and pointed out a number of security concerns with its current layout. He agrees a modern station would not provide the opportunity for something as simple as a suspect trying to escape through an air duct.

He agrees we are going to see a large increase in population when the hospital is built and referenced the school district which was only built to meet their current needs and has to keep coming back for additional schools. The chair also pointed out the problems with passing a referendum in this community but feels that public safety will be a different ballgame.

Mr. Norenberg agreed adding that Chief Brown has pointed out there have been several new police stations that were either built from the ground up or existing stations renovated. We need to emphasize officer safety to the public and the community and how stations are supposed to function compared to our current station. He said we need to tell people it will not be a Taj Mahal but a functional facility and not gold plated.

Mr. Burk added that another key factor is location. The current department is landlocked and it located in a floodplain with all kinds of issues. He has heard there are constant water problems in the basement. Chief Brown agreed it has been a problem since it was built and they have to prepare with sandbags every time a storm is expected.

Mr. Burk asked why the Growmark property is still in question and asked if they want more money. He said they may need to look at multiple locations if that is the case. Mr. Norenberg said the check is in escrow and our attorney follows up with their attorney about once a month. Mr. Burk feels that Growmark is not motivated for some reason.

Mr. Burk wants to use the reports from the last study as a stepping stone. He also requested that Mr. Norenberg forward what he has found so far to Chief Brown and the Committee and the five of them put their heads together and meet in a month or so.

Mr. Norenberg asked if Mr. Burk wishes to draft an RFP in a meeting or if he wants him to work with Chief Brown. Mr. Burk stated that he prefers Chief Brown take the lead because it is a police matter. If it was a City or no-police issue, that would fall under his duties as City Manager. Mr. Norenberg pointed out they are all City employees; Mr. Burk understands that but noted they report to the Police Chief who reports to City Council.

Mr. Norenberg said the reason it was put in the budget in his department is because one of the goals he was given when he was hired was to make sure this project gets finished and he is willing to work with Chief Brown on getting information like this. He sees this as a team effort and wants to help in whatever manner he can. Mr. Burk understands but stated that he wants Chief Brown to take the lead since the officers are really the experts in this case and this is how the City is structured.

Chief Brown said he has no problem with that and Mr. Brooks agreed that is how it should be handled. He added that Milford is lucky because 95% of the employees at the police department have been there for a very long time and understand the problems with the current building. He has also heard from a number of people that all that is needed is to add onto the current building which cannot be done because it is landlocked at its current location.

Mr. Brooks said it is important to emphasize to the community the department is landlocked at its current site and there is no room to grow. He feels that anyone can ride by there and see that. In addition, anytime there is a torrential rain storm, the police officers are in the basement making sandbags.

Chief Brown said they could plan some open houses as they get closer. Mr. Burk recommended a similar presentation to what Ben Muldrow did with the Downtown Master Plan using a powerpoint and comparison to new departments if there is a concern about security with an open house.

Mr. Burk asked who does the staffing at the department; Chief Brown said his staff is involved and it is a joint effort. He noted they would be the ones that understand the needs of the department more than anyone. He concluded by stating that we will be as frugal as possible, but what has been done will be used as well.

Having no further business, Mr. Brooks moved to adjourn the Police Committee Meeting, seconded by Mr. Burk. Motion carried. The Committee Meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Terri K. Hudson, MMC
City Clerk/Recorder