

MILFORD CITY COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
January 31, 2017

A Joint Meeting of the City of Milford Police and Finance Committees was held in the Joseph Ronnie Rogers Council Chambers at Milford City Hall, 201 South Walnut Street, Milford, Delaware on Wednesday, January 31, 2018.

PRESIDING: Mayor Bryan Shupe

IN ATTENDANCE: Councilmembers:  
Police Committee Chair James Burk (Finance Committee Member)  
Police Committee Members Owen Brooks Jr. and Katrina Wilson  
Finance Committee Chair Douglas Morrow

City Manager Eric Norenberg, Police Chief Kenneth Brown and City Clerk Terri Hudson

ABSENT: Finance Committee Member Christopher Mergner

Mayor Shupe called the Joint Committee Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

#### NEW BUSINESS

##### *Recommendations:*

*Funding/Additional Police Officers*

*Funding/New Police Facility*

Mayor Shupe reported that this conversation started a few weeks ago between Chief Brown and a few other Councilmembers who discussed the need for more police officers. He then asked Chief Brown to prepare some comparisons with other police agencies including the number of officers, workloads, etc. They then talked with the Finance Department about the financial impact of the additional officers on property taxes. That information is being presented this evening for the two Committees to determine what it realistically means to our property owners.

Chief Brown said he has known for sometime there was a need for more officers. However, the new building was a priority and he was trying to postpone the request. They recently began to experience an increase in the number of shootings and two shootings occurred in one night. It brought to light the safety aspect of being short on officers. At the time, he only had a skeleton crew working on the shootings which caused some concern.

The Chief then talked to Mayor Shupe about trying to hold off requesting additional officers when he realized that officer safety needed to come first.

Chief Brown said that originally, he was going to use the number of complaints received by each department. Unfortunately, every department handles complaints differently so they came up with a better comparison. As a result, DELJIS (Delaware Justice Information System) was requested to provide Milford with an analysis of actual crime reports this past November.

He received statistics from January 1, 2017-October 30, 2017. He referred to the document that shows Milford, who was used as the benchmark with 2,139 crime reports filed during that time. Originally it was broken down by police departments throughout the State of Delaware and the percent difference. However, today he decided to take the number of reports (Milford 2,139) divided by the number of officers at each department (Milford 32).

He reported that in Milford, the average number of written reports each of the officers handled is 67. Chief Brown then presented the numbers of the following departments in comparison to number of officers and reports.

The result is that Milford's officers are doing the highest number of crime reports as is noted below.

Department	Total Crime Reports	Average # Reports Per Officer	
<b><u>MILFORD</u></b>	<b><u>2,139</u></b>	<b><u>66.84</u></b>	<b><u>(32)</u></b>
Dover	4,648	45.12	
Georgetown	1,338	66.09	
Harrington	437	33.61	
Middletown	1,678	50.85	(33)
Rehoboth Beach	438	25.76	
Seaford	1,519	54.25	
Smyrna	1,187	51.60	
DSP Troop*	5,155	55.43	
Wilmington	9,388	29.34	(320)

\*Delaware State Police/Covers Kent County

Chief Brown emphasized that the comparison provides an accurate picture of the crime in Milford and the numbers of reports being written by Milford officers far exceeds what officers in other departments do. It confirmed what Chief Brown already knew and that more police officers are needed to respond to the high number of complaints the department receives. He noted that this type of workload prevents Milford Officers from doing proactive duties such as foot patrol in the downtown area.

When asked how long we have been at this same level of 32 officers, Chief Brown stated that when he started in 1988, there were twenty officers and the City had a population of 6,000.

Officers were added as noted in the following years:

<u>Year</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Total</u>
1989	2	24
1997	2	26
2005	4	30
2013	2	32*

\*Milford School District increased the number of SRO's from 1 to 3 though costs are shared.

Chief Brown explained that even though his top priority was a new building, he does not honestly know that if these additional officers are approved, where he will house them. When asked, he said it can be done, but will be an issue.

Councilman Brooks pointed out there are four shifts and recommends adding one person to each shift. He feels that one extra officer is needed at all times.

Chief Brown explained that another detective is also needed. There have been two detectives in the Criminal Division since the early 1970's. There has been a new Drug Detective added though that is completely separate from the Criminal Division.

The Chief pointed out the population in Milford has doubled since the early 1970's.

The next academy starts in September. The hospital will be up and running for several months before these new officers complete their training and are released. Even if this is approved now, he will be playing catch up in order to prepare for what is coming with the new developments and new hospital campus.

Chief Brown wants to be prepared before that happens even though the hospital will be operating before these officers have been released.

Police Committee Chair Burk stated that we have also seen crime increase. Even if our population had not doubled, we would see an increase in crime and there is a need to be proactive as a result. Chair Burk added that he does not want to see

a trailer behind the police department to house these officers. He feels that the new police station must be considered at the same time as the additional officers. The due diligence on the land has been completed and he feels this is another piece of what we need to provide Chief Brown in order to prepare for what is to come.

Chairman Burk is concerned we will start seeing spikes in violent crimes and the development in Milford will not continue if that starts to happen. He referenced the recent heroin bust in the downtown area which he said is only the tip of the iceberg. He is sure there is a lot more out there and the reason Milford needs more detectives.

Chairman Burk supports Chief's Brown request for more officers and the associated increase in property taxes. He asked if that is something that can be discussed at budget time because the new officers would not start the academy until September.

City Accountant Suzannah Frederick then provided the following financial snapshot though her analogy was only based on four new officers (certified versus non-certified).

The first section involved hiring Trained Officers this fiscal year. However, Chief Brown pointed out that Milford has not received applications from any Certified Officer in some time so there will be no budget impact this fiscal year which makes those numbers obsolete.

Ms. Frederick shared that her projections were based on the current salary chart for police. For the first six months, the officers would receive the academy salary of \$45,675/annual salary or 26 weeks at a cost of \$22,838. Field training would follow at an annual salary of \$46,175 or 12 weeks at a cost of \$10,656. For the remaining fiscal year, their salary would be \$12,566 for 14 weeks at an annual salary of \$46,675 once all training is completed.

FY 2019/Cost Per Officer

Total Salary Cost	\$46,060
Average Benefits	\$13,818
Testing & Academy Materials*	\$6,710
Uniforms & Equipment Upon Graduation*	\$5,319
Total Cost Per Hire for First Year	\$71,906
Total Cost for Four Officers	\$287,624

It was noted the Teamsters are currently negotiating their contract which begins in July 2019; the anticipated increase is a minimum of 2%.

Ms. Frederick continued by reporting the current budgeted real estate taxes are \$3,820,560.

Additional Revenue of a one cent tax increase would be \$83,056 (at the current 46 cents property tax rate)

A 3.5 cent tax increase will be needed to cover the costs of four new officers.

Based on that projection, property taxes would increase as follows:

Value of Home	Current	1 Officer	2 Officers	3 Officers	4 Officers	5 Officers	6 Officers
\$100,000	460	469	477	486	495	503	512
\$150,000	690	703	716	729	742	755	768
\$200,000	920	937	955	972	989	1,007	1,024
\$250,000	1,150	1,172	1,193	1,215	1,237	1,258	1,280
\$300,000	1,380	1,406	1,432	1,458	1,484	1,510	1,536

Chairman Burk asked if the additional five police officers and new police facility can be bundled together. Finance Chair

Morrow stated that the building will need to be a referendum and the officers would require a tax increase that can be approved by City Council. However, the voters will make the decision on the building.

Mr. Norenberg agrees the referendum must be taken to the voters though it makes sense to market them together as a package. Chairman Burk said he does not want it to appear as though the City is double dipping which is his concern. Mr. Norenberg agreed adding that the selling points will be to benefit the community and the reasons for the officers in the buildings overlap and complement each other.

Chairman Burk is hoping for 100% support from Council because it will be needed. He does not want this referendum to fail and instead wants to be successful the first round. He pointed out the City has learned from the School District what works and what does not work.

Finance Chairman Morrow stressed that we simply need to be upfront and honest. Police Chair Burk agrees adding we have to have accurate numbers and set talking points. He believes the school district's failure was a result of different stories from different people and everyone in the City needs to be on the same page.

In addition, Mr. Burk pointed out that a lot of people didn't agree with the school referendum because they had no children in the schools. However, everyone in Milford has a stake in this police department.

Councilwoman Wilson agrees adding that City Council has agreed with the need for many years. She feels that it will be supported.

Mayor Shupe agrees adding that we need to emphasize how the City is encouraging new businesses such as Bayhealth, Nemours and Nationwide and that will not happen if crime continues to climb, particularly if people are uncomfortable walking the streets.

Councilman Morrow asked the last year we had a tax increase; City Clerk Hudson confirmed it was done in 2012 after the last reassessment. The tax rate had to be rolled back to match the original value and then readjusted in order to increase the rate at the same time. It resulted in the rate being increase to forty-six cents, which was the rate prior to reassessment. However, more taxes were collected as a result of increased property values.

Councilman Morrow thinks the last tax increase prior to that was in 2000. He feels that all Councilmembers will support the tax increase for additional officers and a new police department, as responsible representatives of the community. Councilwoman Wilson agrees adding that everyone should expect this. This has been discussed for a number of years and has been postponed each year. It is not something new, and the sooner it can be done, the better.

Police Committee Chairman Burk reported that Dan Redstone, the Police Facility Expert, who worked with the previous Police Chief, informed them at the IACP Police Conference, that he would be willing to come to Milford and provide an informed presentation. Councilmembers Morrow and Wilson both agreed he had done an exceptional job in the past.

It was agreed an expert is needed as we move forward.

Chairman Burk recommends getting support from Bayhealth, Nationwide and other big players to share our thoughts of a safe community. He feels that petty crime is on the rise in every ward and more police presence will help.

Mr. Norenberg suggested Chief Brown acquire a more detailed site plan relevant to the Growmark site. Residents will want to know more about realistic costs. Currently, we only have projected costs based on cost per square foot though it needs to align with that particular site. He believes the previous plans were designed with the parcel in the business park in mind where the solar panels were installed. An architect needs to be retained so we move forward with some preliminary designs and renderings so that our voters understand what they are going to get, in addition to refining the costs.

He recalled that Chief Brown, Mayor Shupe and he went to Smyrna Police Department and one of the most vital advice was

to hire an architect that is an expert in police facilities, because their architect did not have that experience. As a result, there were a number of mistakes made that later cost them a great deal more.

Chairman Burk agreed adding that their Town Council's fault because they tried to save money and cut corners despite what was originally recommended. For example, there was a problem with bulletproof glass though they realized that risk after the facility was built.

He also pointed out that the site of Smyrna's Police Department has plenty of room to grow and we do not want to become landlocked as is the case now. Mayor Shupe feels the proposed site will certainly be big enough to allow Milford to grow in the future.

Chairman Burk recommends we start planning workshops for the public and taking our plans to churches, civic organizations and other groups.

The City Manager agreed that is a huge part of educating the public. He then responded to a question that there was no money budgeted though he recommends the next step should be to prepare an RFP to hire an architect or engineering firm who has vast experience on police stations. However, once Council authorizes that contract, the City should be ready because our residents will begin to talk. As Councilwoman Wilson alluded to, it is critical that all of Council provide the correct information with the same answers regarding the need, its importance, etc. He agrees the City has a lot of work to do before this is put out to the voters. He emphasized that the worst thing that could be done is to put the wrong information out for a vote and come up short by not having enough money for the project.

Chairman Burk confirmed that the next police academy starts in September. In the meantime, the police department needs to start a heavy campaign to advertise for new police officers.

Mayor Shupe emphasized that the money will need to be spent at some point even if we tell the public that a new police department is going to be needed down the road and it does not happen right away. We don't want to spend a lot of money just because we are hopeful that something will happen though he understands it needs to happen. Chairman Burk agreed there is no way around it.

Chairman Burk asked Chief Brown how much time Milford Officers spend at Milford Hospital right now; Chief Brown responded by saying Milford Officers are there all the time. The Chairman pointed out that focus will now be moved to the southern part of town which will stretch those officers even more.

Mayor Shupe asked if Milford Police spends a lot of time at larger businesses like Walmart; Chief Brown stated that Walmart is a drain for any police agency. He was recently talking to the Georgetown Chief who feels the same way. The Mayor asked if there is a way for them to have their own security though he is unsure of the legal ramifications. Chief Brown explained it would not matter because they are unable to handle forgeries, bad checks and credit card fraud even though shoplifting is the main issue. Milford Walmart catches multiple shoplifters everyday.

Councilman Brooks said there is a police car at Walmart every time he goes in and comes out.

Chairman Burk commented that two units are tied up all the time between Walmart and the hospital. Councilman Brooks added that Wawa has police issues all the time as well.

Chief Brown said he also talked to Mayor Shupe about the amount of time involved with arrests. For example, a DUI arrest used to take about an hour when he first started. But today, it will take a minimum of two to three hours for even the best DUI officer because of all the things that are required. That takes one officer off the road for that length of time. If there are only three officers working, there are now only two on the road because one is in the station.

The Chief also explained that if the officer has to wait on a judge at the court, that takes even more time. One incident then takes more than three hours to handle.

Councilwoman Wilson was surprised that with today's technology, something hasn't been done to help with that situation. Chief Brown pointed out that it takes more time because the courts demand so much more. Officers are required to do certain field tests now, in a certain order. Before the suspect is given a breathalyzer, the officer has to sit and watch that suspect for a minimum of twenty minutes. If the person belches or puts anything in their mouth, the twenty minutes starts all over again.

Councilman Brooks said if we are going to raise taxes approximately four cents for four officers, the tax bill on a \$100,000 home would only go up \$40. If the referendum for the new police building was approved, property taxes may have to be raised another six or seven cents. If property taxes are raised \$40 for the new officers and two months later, the City tries to get a referendum passed, the property owner is going to complain that their property taxes were already raised \$40.

Councilman Morrow agrees that is a concern and a reason why it should be bundled as Chairman Burk recommended.

Chairman Burk expressed concern that if Council approves the least expensive tax increase and then we go to referendum for a bigger tax increase, is going to be difficult to get approved. He agrees it needs to be bundled and recommends a public safety referendum where the public makes the decision on both items.

Councilman Brooks wants to be honest and does not want them to say they were sold a bill of goods, as happened with the school district. He does not want to raise someone's taxes by \$40 and then ask for a referendum to do the same thing again. He wants them to understand what is going on.

Chairman Burk recommends a motion be made to do an RFP and have Chief reach out to Redstone in the meantime. Mayor Shupe advised that a recommendation will be needed for City Council. Councilman Morrow pointed out that Redstone already has the preliminary drawings from five or so years ago. Chief Brown agreed adding that French and Ryan were also involved. Councilman Brooks recalled being very impressed with the renderings Alvin French presented to Council.

Chief Brown agreed that French and Ryan were the local architects at the time.

Councilwoman Wilson agreed their plans were fabulous and there was a lot of time and effort put into what was needed. She felt the plans addressed everything at the time though she understands times and guidelines have changed and updates will be required as a result.

Councilman Morrow feels it would be wise for the City to consider using the current station because it is across the street. However, he does not think that is possible because he is also aware of the flooding problems there and the reason the building is unable to be sold.

It was noted that it was built in flood prone location though money may be able to be available through FEMA if those funding sources still exist. He recalled that FEMA had some grant programs to mitigate future disaster costs. So there is a possibility money may be available to demolish the building and mitigate that site and turn it into a park. Their desire is to avoid having another use on that site, such as the building, that will continue to result in more damages.

Mr. Norenberg then recommended getting some sample RFI's to solicit qualifications. Firms could then be interviewed and one selected based on competency and experience with police departments. In that manner, the project should start to be looked at in a phased process. The preliminary plans could be used to help educate the public in their decision making which would be a benefit. If the referendum is approved, that would provide money for the full-blown project.

It was agreed that makes the most sense versus designing the entire building without knowing if it can be fully funded.

Mr. Norenberg estimates the design project to take the better part of this year and may be a two-step process.

Councilman Brooks suggested we ask companies in Milford to make donations. He stated when DuPonts was in Seaford and wanted to do something that required big bucks, a business like Perdue or Walmart donated toward it. Councilman Morrow said that should be included in the presentation.

Chairman Burk recommended following the lead that Bayhealth had in raising funds with a billboard asking for support. He felt they did an exceptional marketing campaign. It's not hard for him to understand the need, but there is a need for residents to understand that public safety is a priority.

He added that during the Ward 2 Community Conversation meetings, it was blatantly obvious that Ward 2 preferred to have bike trails over improved public safety. He feels that can be attributed to his ward having lower crime statistics than the other three wards. There were only two residents in favor of a new police station and both were family members of Councilman Burk. Everyone else preferred the recreational items like bike trails.

As a result, he and Councilwoman Peel will have some work to do in their ward.

Chairman Burk recommends asking each member of Council for their support on record because he wants everyone backing this project.

Councilman Brooks assured Chairman Burk that the concern of the majority of residents in Ward 3 is speed. He said that is a big problem when he talks to them and all he hears about vehicles speeding though he also sees it in other parts of town. Councilman Burk agreed that is an issue in his ward as well as he has discussed with Council in the past.

Chairman Burk made a motion to recommend that City Council move forward with a Public Safety referendum which would include the new police building and the additional five officers that Chief Brown is requesting, though it will need to be worked out if the two items should be voted on separately. The Chairman prefers it be presented as a one-shot deal and that Chief Brown move forward with the plans, seconded by Councilman Morrow. Motion carried by unanimous vote of those in attendance.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Councilwomen Wilson moved to adjourn the Joint Committee meeting, seconded by Councilman Burk. Motion carried.

The Police and Finance Committee meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Terri K. Hudson, MMC  
City Clerk/Recorder