

August 18, 2016

The Special Meeting of the Lehigh Borough Council with Franklin Township Supervisors and Mahoning Township Supervisors was held in the Municipal Building on Thursday, August 18, 2016. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by President Grant Hunsicker. Members in attendance were: Jared McEvoy, Helen Torok, Joe Flickinger and Scott Rehrig. Absent: Lisa Perry and Darryl Arner. Officials in attendance were: Borough Manager Nicole Beckett, Borough Secretary Brenda Koons and Police Chief Brian Biechy. Franklin Township Supervisors in attendance were: Rod Green, Robin Cressley and Barbara Beltz. Mahoning Township Supervisors in attendance were: John Weiczorek, Bruce Steigerwalt. Mahoning Township Supervisor Frank Ruch came late to the meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

New Business

Discussion with Franklin Township Supervisors regarding request for contracted police services

Chief Biechy said he was contacted by Franklin Township to meet and discuss contracted services between our borough and their township. At the request of the police safety committee he put the request in to hold the meeting tonight and he extended the invitation to Mahoning Township as well for the same reasons.

Rod Green said Franklin Police Department is at a crossroads. Their chief will retire in 6 months. The supervisors feels his is a good time to look at contracted services with Lehigh Borough. They feel this is a good idea for two reasons. 1.) The borough will make a profit, 2.) Franklin Township will have better protection and a stronger police presence.

They currently have 3 officers and 1 chief. The supervisors think Lehigh has a good police force that would be beneficial to Franklin. They feel this will be good for Lehigh because you would have a bigger budget, more money for better equipment, better training. He admits Franklin doesn't have the money to train like Lehigh does. He thinks with more money it would make better sense to have better training for everyone all the way around. It would give the borough more money to hire more officers to cover our area as well. And that is what we are looking for. We are looking for more coverage/protection in our township; not taking away from your town. We have the resources to make the force bigger and that is what we are looking for. It would be a benefit to have one department headed the same direction instead of two departments headed in different directions. He said you get to a call and have all the departments discussing what to do where if you had one department they already know the chain of command and they go from there. Also, the other thing is we have 4 officer and don't have full time coverage. Random patrols don't work but saturation patrols do. It's a fact. People see the patrol cars coming around keeping the bad guys on their toes.

Rod is hoping the public won't have to worry about coverage. He thinks with combined resources we can make advances in all areas. He believes it's a win, win situation for both Lehigh and Franklin.

Chief Biechy said he thinks this is a subject they are willing to discuss. It has been discussed with some members already. This is a non-action meeting and after this at the wish of council we will proceed or not. If we proceed there will be other meetings. Brian thinks Franklin is on point. It's an interesting topic but it will be up to council to say whether or not they think it will be feasible for the borough or not. We will be back in touch with a decision.

Rod does not expect an answer overnight. They know it's a long process with several meetings.

Discussion with Mahoning Township Supervisors regarding request for contracted police services

Chief Biechy asked the Mahoning Supervisors if they had anything to say.

John Weiczorek to put this into context they had approached Lehighton a while back looking for contracted services particularly for shift they could not cover. Over time that has changed. They are still interested to see what Lehighton can do to complement what Mahoning already has and if there is potential to go further than just contracted services. When he looks at the potential to improve the deficiencies between the townships and boroughs that are going to participate he doesn't think they are reaching for the moon but would like to continue discussing this matter. At least discuss what Lehighton can offer that would fit Mahoning's needs or if Mahoning's demands exceed what Lehighton is willing to provide. There is not cost in getting together and kicking these things around. He thinks the township would be willing to participate.

Bruce Steigerwalt said they currently attempt to have 24/7 coverage. We have 5 fulltime officers and a chief. We pretty much accomplish that but we have overtime. So personally he would be looking at contracting 24/7 to see if that is a better deal budget wise for the township than what they are currently budgeting. Secondly, they also are working on redoing their municipal building. The drawings they are working on would bring the police who are currently upstairs downstairs. The question is also do they need to go and renovate the building with the additional cost. Do we need to build a new police station vs. contracting services and not having to provide a police station and get it off the second floor which is not handicapped accessible, it's small and cramped for the size of the police force and has other issues. They have to look at the capital expenditures as well as the cost of the police for labor, benefits and vehicles.

Mr. Weiczorek said if an agreement could be reached and they end up changing the floor plan and end up using their facility that would be renovated being used as a satellite office. These are things down the road but things Mahoning would consider doing.

Chief Biechy told Bruce his only question is when 24/7 contracted services is brought up what would you be looking at doing with your current force? Bruce said he thinks they would disband it.

John said in previous conversations when Lehighton hires an officer they are hired through civil service. Brian said yes. John said if that potential came to be. They would certainly be in a position to follow Lehighton's lead. He doesn't know if they would have to force their existing force to Lehighton. That would be at the discretion of practices currently in place for Lehighton currently and a new employee. Brian said correct and some of Lehighton's issues become; keeping in mind that what we are talking about is not a consolidation or regionalization; it's a straight up contracted service where basically whatever would happen would be Lehighton's call. We are running the show. We are in control. It's our hierarchy, our council makes the ultimate decision, it falls under Brian and the mayor to run the departments, set up how they function, how they operate from daily patrol to investigations from SOPs to equipment and even response to calls would fall completely under Lehighton. Which is why Brian posed the question to Bruce. Brian wasn't sure if Mahoning was looking for Lehighton to cover empty spots in their scheduling or to sit and talk about the 24/7 contract.

Brian said over the last two weeks he has learned more about contracted services and it comes down to an array of whatever the two organizations agree on. Some are a flat out check and its full services. Basically here's the money do what you are doing at your

own place just do it for us. Others have it down to rental of floor space at certain locations, hourly rates. Some places have built in equipment percentages or bought equipment that is designed throughout the process. Others pay by a breakdown of how many calls you answer, court hours you're at, how much overtime you have and things like that. It can get broken down to specifics. He prefers without meeting with other chiefs who run these types of departments or contracted services would be the type of services we provide as Lehighton Borough Police Department. It's pretty transparent what we do and you cut us a check. IF it requires him showing up a township meeting a few times a year that's fine. Some are written up that the police chief and mayor meet with township supervisors quarterly. It's pretty flexible. To keep it clean. We are law enforcement and we provide that type of service. He wouldn't understand why you wouldn't want all of it. You pay for all of it, you get all of it and it keeps it very clean and simple. And we get to keep what we have been doing.

#### Discussion on the next steps

Frank Ruch asked if they should put down on paper what they are expecting. Chief Biechy said what he thinks will happen after tonight is that borough council will meet and determine if they want to proceed past this point or not. If it's a no; it's pretty self-explanatory. If it's a yes then on a committee level Brian would want to go to Sellersville, Allegheny County and meet with those borough officials and discuss who they set it up, How did it work? What were the down falls? What would you do over again? How did you get that to work? To give us a better understanding of is it something we are really interested in undertaking. If it gets past that point then we sit down as committees and discuss this is what each is looking for and can we get it to happen and start working on expectations, timelines, budgets, list of what you're looking for. It's going to be lengthy and in-depth.

John asked if it's decided to move on to the next step and focus on how to make it work instead of what we don't want or how it won't work. He would like to focus on how to make it work to everyone's advantage and that's best for all. Brian thinks that is doable.

Rod Green of Franklin Township said they do want full service.

Chief Biechy said this will take a timeline of 1-2 years from what he could see in his research for tonight's meeting.

Bruce commented that they know Brian will not be doing this research out of the goodness of his heart and Bruce feels that Mahoning Township does not want the borough to not proceed because of the potential cost involved. If they are given some idea of what the potential cost will be they would agree to share in the expenses of this research. The borough should not incur all the cost of looking into this and then it doesn't go anywhere. What he is trying to say is that he personally doesn't want this conversation turned down because of cost. Rod Green of Franklin Township said Franklin would do the same. Brian appreciates this. So far it has been phone calls and emails. There are some departments in the area but it is popular out west near Pittsburg and Allegheny County. He will keep a tally of costs and keep it fair.

#### Adjournment

##### Motion to adjourn the meeting

Councilors Rehrig/Flickinger made the motions to adjourn at 6:30 p.m. and all were in favor.

Brenda L. Koons  
Borough Secretary