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**MIDDLETOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT**

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**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION**

***MINUTES – POLICE***

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2016**

**7:00 P.M.**

**MIDDLETOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT**

***(COMMUNITY ROOM)***

**1. Meeting Called to Order by Chairman Robert Santangelo**

***MEMBERS PRESENT:*** Councilman Robert Santangelo, Chairman  
Councilman Carl Chisem  
Councilwoman Deborah Kleckowski  
Councilman Philip Pessina  
Councilwoman Mary Bartolotta

***STAFF PRESENT:*** William McKenna – Chief of Police  
Michael Timbro - Deputy Chief of Police

**2. Approval of Minutes – October 17, 2016**

Councilman Pessina moved for approval of the Public Safety Commission (PSC) Minutes for October 17, 2016; Seconded by Councilman Chisem. There being no discussion or objection, Motion passed.

**3. Public Hearing – Matters on the Agenda Only**

Detective Derek Puorro, Vice-President of AFSCME Local # 1361, indicated that he had come before the Public Safety Commission in the past to express the Union's concerns about staffing levels. Puorro thanked the Chief, Deputy Chief, The Common Council and the Public Safety Commission for listening to the Union's concerns and implementing a plan. Puorro indicated that at a recent meeting of Finance and Government, the plan to increase the minimum manpower was supported, but as expected, increased the amount of overtime and order-ins. Puorro stated that hiring more officers would be beneficial to the entire department. Puorro indicated that the Detectives are also short staffed and that more Detectives are needed to lessen the case load. Increasing the number of officers for the department would also put more personnel in the Detective Division.

**4. Monthly Reports (Attached)**

Deputy Chief Timbro discussed the Overtime budget, reporting that the overtime money will be gone shortly and expect a shortfall of \$600,000-\$700,000 for the fiscal year. Chief McKenna stated that there were a couple of options; the first would be to tap into the regular

Overtime budget. The second option would be to get a portion of estimated costs in salary now and run that out. The replacement Overtime Line was going to be in the red soon. Councilwoman Bartolotta recommended using the Regular Overtime budget first. Councilwoman Bartolotta asked what the average weekly/monthly cost was. Deputy Chief Timbro reported that the current average was \$101,000 a month for the first four months of the fiscal year. Chief McKenna stated that the weekly average was about \$21,000 but there are currently two vacancies, three recruits in the academy and two more expected to enter the academy in January, which will take a while to realize. Also there are currently four officers and one sergeant on light duty, which brings the department to 101 working officers.

Deputy Chief Timbro reported that by all calculations; without any additional manpower or injuries, the budget will still be short at least \$600,000. Deputy Chief asked if an appropriation request should be made now or should the regular overtime budget be used up. Councilwoman Bartolotta recommended using the regular overtime budget first before requesting an appropriation. Councilwoman Bartolotta also recommended comparing the number of injured officers off the books last year to this year and be ready to explain the data when it is presented to Finance and Government.

Chairman Santangelo said that the Public Safety Commission was aware that there would be a shortfall when they committed to raise the minimum manpower and he was sure that the Common Council will support the requisition for more funds.

## **5. Correspondence**

Chief McKenna went over the Letters of Appreciation he received:

- Letter from City Attorney Brig Smith regarding the recent Kirma Review which showed a dramatic turn-around in the Police Department, lowering the city's liability.
  
- Letter from Wesleyan President praising the Police Department's handling of an unannounced protest on Veteran's Day and a Student Walk-Out the following week. Chief McKenna said that he was very proud of the officers, who were all required to take a First Amendment Rights test again (the first time was after Ferguson).
  
- The Chief had received additional "Atta-Boys" which were not reviewed. Chairman Santangelo thanked all department members for a job well done.

## **6. Old Business**

### *a. Traffic at Middletown High School*

Sgt. Godwin and Officer Inglis of the Traffic Division did an assessment of the current traffic situation and proposed some changes. Chief McKenna praised them for their quick response and proposal. The proposal was discussed if the access road was made into a double lane, the left lane would be Northbound only and the right would be Southbound only. Public Works and State DOT would need to be involved to make those changes.

Officer Inglis spoke about widening the bus lane. A quick fix would be to take about ten feet out of the curbing. The bus lane could be split using a painted island and cones to designate a pick up and drop off area. The existing parking stalls would be removed.

Sgt. Godwin suggested that the school stagger the dismissals of drivers. That the school could regulate who leaves first (ex. Seniors, good grades, etc). Sgt. McKenna stated that the Police Department has done all it can do. That the school administration is happy with the proposal and the school administration needs to bring it forward to public works. The Traffic Division has already spoken with the Public Works Director and made of the changes could be done with “in kind” services.

Councilman Pessina made a motion to forward the matter to Public Works, seconded by Councilwoman Kleckowski. There being no discussion or objection, Motion passed. Councilwoman Bartolotta recommended that an email be sent to the Superintendent of Schools that the matter is being forwarded to Public Works, for a record of it.

## **7. New Business**

### *a. Route 9 Project*

Chief McKenna asked at the last Common Council Meeting about the status of the project. Sgt. Godwin indicated that the project is on a “fast track” and that the MPD Traffic Division was not consulted for the proposal. Sgt. Godwin voiced his concerns over the project, that Main Street is already gridlocked at busy times due to the state traffic lights not being able to communicate with city traffic lights. The lights can be changed to adjust with traffic during busy times. The new technology is there to facilitate traffic. The crosswalks would also need to be changed over. Sgt. Godwin recommended the state work on a campaign to educate the public on concurrent crossing, which is currently in place in the North End. Sgt. Godwin said that Middletown could be a test for the new light system. Chief McKenna said that according to Councilman Daley, the state has already made some updates to the plan regarding bumpouts and is concerned that the state is not updating the city on the plan. Councilman Pessina said that he was concerned that if traffic is not properly routed on Main Street, the downtown businesses would be affected. Chief McKenna assigned Traffic Division to monitor the plan progress and update the PSC. Councilwoman commented about the gridlock on Main Street in front of the firehouse. Sgt. Godwin suggested a city ordinance for “not blocking the box” in front of the firehouse, so it can be enforced, currently it is only a courtesy. Courtesy boxes can only be enforced if they are at an intersection.

### *b. Financial Impact of Increasing Number of Sworn Personnel*

Chief McKenna stated that back in 2011, when he was the acting chief, he requested an increase in the number of sworn personnel. He requested an increase again in 2012 when he and Deputy Chief Timbro took over. They conducted a study 1 ½ years ago with the assistance of the Federal government and the study recommended the department have 124 sworn officers. that number may be higher now with the addition of many new apartment complexes being approved in the city, meaning more residents. The department currently has two vacancies, which should be filled soon, one retirement and eighteen officers eligible to retire. Chief McKenna recommended hiring 3 new officers a year for 5 years, until the department reaches 124. One officer would be hired every January, April and July to ease the burden on the budget if a new officer was hired January 1<sup>st</sup>, the financial impact to the PD budget would be approx. \$42,000. The impact to the Finance Department would be 90% of salary for a total of \$73,000 total impact to the city. An April hire would mean an impact of \$23,000 to the PD and \$40,000 to the city and a July hire would mean a \$77,000 impact to the PD and \$140,000 to the city. Chief McKenna said that he hoped all PSC members would endorse the proposal and asked

for approval to begin process to increase manpower. Chief McKenna emphasized that manpower needs to be increased to reduce the impact the overtime is having on the current personnel.

Chairman Santangelo indicated that the matter should be moved over to Finance and Government to review before the next budget season. Councilman Pessina said that the Police Department is responsible for the economic development of the city and that Larry McHugh of the Chamber of Commerce agrees with that philosophy. Chief McKenna agreed as well and said that the number of police personnel hasn't changed in 30 years. Chief McKenna noted that due to the group effort by the PSC, progress is being made in increasing the number of officers. Councilman Pessina praised the Chief and Deputy Chief's five year projected plan and made a motion to move the matter to Finance and Government; seconded by Councilman Chisem. There being no discussion or objection, Motion passed.

Chief McKenna thanked the PSC for the support and said that the Union also appreciates the support. Chief McKenna reported since the Boston Marathon bombing, the PD has been doubling the cost at downtown events and the council has been reducing the budget by \$1,000.00 at each event which the PD is spending approx \$7,000.00 more at each event. Chief McKenna said that as far as appropriation time, if the city wants to continue having these events, it comes with a price tag. Maybe the city can ask the businesses to contribute. Councilwoman Bartolotta said that the culture in Middletown needs to be changed. Councilman Pessina said that we have a well-informed commission that supports the PD efforts and that they get a lot of positive feedback from people who come to the events.

Councilwoman Kleckowski praised Officer Knapp's efforts at the Turkey Drive and participating in the Middletown Community Thanksgiving Project. Chief McKenna said that he receives a lot of great support and letters of thanks from the community and asked the PSC to show their support by approving the proposal for increased manpower. Chief Kronenberger of Middletown Fire thanked the Police Department for the assist with traffic at retired Deputy Fire Chief Paul Rash's funeral. Chief Kronenberger praised Officer Inglis for single handedly blocking every intersection during the funeral escort.

**8. Public Hearing Reopened – (Other Matters)**

None.

**9. Meeting Adjourned...**

**Next Public Safety Commission Meeting: Monday December 19, 2016, at 7:00 pm.**

Respectfully Submitted,

William J. Warner  
Recording Secretary