

MINUTES

PUBLIC SAFETY AD HOC COMMITTEE

LOWER ALLEN TOWNSHIP

REGULAR MEETING

AUGUST 5, 2019

The following Committee Members were in ATTENDANCE:

Dave Holl	Director of Department of Public Safety
Leon Crone	Police Captain
Tony Deaven	EMS Captain
Frank Williamson	Fire Chief – Lisburn Comm Fire Company
Dave Murdoch	Fire Chief – Lower Allen Fire Company
Frank Wirth	Fire Captain
Tom Vernau	Township Manager
H. Edward Black	Board of Commissioners
Dean Villone	Board of Commissioners
Carolyn Holtzman	Board of Commissioners
Ped Young	Board of Commissioners / Beaver Rd Area
Amanda Lerew	West Shore School District
John Ortenzio	Select Capital Commercial Properties
Terry Lenker	Township Resident – Sheepford Area
Dick Hammon	Township Resident – Rossmoyne Area
Dick Bonneville	Township Resident – Beacon Hill
Thomas Kutz	Township Resident – Sheepford Area

The following members of the audience were in attendance: Mr. Rick Grove, Lower Allen Township Finance Director.

WELCOME

Director Holl called the August 5, 2019 meeting of the 2019 Public Safety Ad Hoc Committee to order at 6:00 pm in the Emergency Operations Center of the Lower Allen Township Municipal Building, 2233 Gettysburg Road, Camp Hill. Mr. Holl asked if there were any questions from previous meetings. There were none.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Williamson moved to approve the minutes from the July 29, 2019 Public Safety Ad Hoc Committee meeting. Mr. Bonneville seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

QUESTIONS AND FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

There were none.

PRESENTATION: PUBLIC SAFETY / FINANCE / FUTURE

Overarching Financial Goal

Mr. Rick Grove, Finance Director, began his presentation to the Ad Hoc Committee with an explanation of the current financial state of the Township. He stated that Public Safety is an independent variable that has a large effect on the finances of the Township. The goal is to provide a good mix of economic value of municipal outputs (municipal services) divided by inputs taken from Township boarders (taxes and fees from residents and businesses.) This must exceed one and must exceed the quotient of our competitors.

Mr. Grove stated that in a housing survey completed by the United States Census Bureau, people valued a safe neighborhood above all else and are willing to pay more for property in a safe neighborhood. Public Safety is vital to achieving this. Look and design of the neighborhood was also important. Lower Allen Township was one of the first townships to have a Codes Department and a Zoning Officer. CALEA also provides more economic value to the community than what it costs to have the program.

Long Term Plans

Informal plans by the Township:

1. Taxation Plan – raised taxes in 2018 to carry the Township through the next recession or half decade; did not take into account hiring additional officers for Public Safety.
2. Five Year Capital Plan – capital levels funded to average of \$450,000 plus inflation per year, not counting fire capital.
3. Long-term Fire Capital Plan – fire fund non-capital expenditures limited to a 3% increase per year.

Mr. Grove spoke about the tax burden being lower if there are ample reserves maintained and to avoid a tax increase during a recession. A good bond rating allows for borrowing at a lower amount. He also stated that bringing money in during good economic times helps to cover times of recession when reserves are relied upon heavily.

Currently, Mr. Grove said that revenues are strong, but this will not always be the case as the Township reaches capacity in building. Two additional police officers will add future expenditure pressure.

Public Safety

Mr. Grove explained that Public Safety includes Police, Fire, Ambulance, Community Development, and Stormwater. Expenses from just Public Safety account for 53% of Township expenses. Police salaries are increased due to being part of a mandated collective bargaining unit. Public Safety's average annual expenses grow at 7.5% compared to 4.6% for other Township departments. It is made up of 48% wages, 24% benefits, 22% good and services, and 6% depreciation. Mr. Grove provided several charts in his hand-out as an example of the breakdown between these areas.

- Police: police expenses have an average annual increase of \$252,013. This equals a 7% increase in the budget. This is considered a fast growth rate with recent acceleration. A lot of the budget for Police goes to wages and benefits.
- Fire expenses: the general fund pays wages and benefits for fire expenses which is transferred from the Fire Fund. Fire has a 7.1% growth rate with recent acceleration.
- Ambulance: the ambulance expenses have been affected by adding ALS and purchasing an additional ambulance. This caused an 11.6% growth rate but it will not continue. Reimbursements

have decreased due to Medicare. Having an ambulance can bring in a good amount of revenue for a Township. Billable calls are increasing but Medicare is no longer reimbursing the Township.

- Community Development: building and zoning; not a focus of the Ad Hoc Committee.
- Public Safety Officers: (PSO's) have a 7.1% growth rate as do other areas of public safety. There is a recent acceleration in expense.

Full Time Equivalent Employees (FTE's)

Mr. Grove stated that 70% of the Township's expenses are labor related. FTE's are figured by dividing the total number of work hours paid by the number of work hours in a work year. Police are the largest group and make up 30% of all hours worked. Of FTE's worked, police account for 66%.

Future Police Costs

Two new police officers have been added for 2019. An additional officer is anticipated to be added in 2020 and 2021. This will increase the budget annually until it peaks in 2027 at an additional \$704,220. Mr. Grove stated that there is normally two tax increases per year, the last two being .39 mil and .37 mil. That translates to \$631,000. At this point a third tax increase is needed in order to keep the burden on the tax payers at a minimum. The current millage rate in Lower Allen Township is 1.99 mils. The last increase was in 2017, effective in 2018.

COMMITTEE QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

Mr. Bonneville asked if the tax increase was being offset by the new development taking place at Arcona. Mr. Grove said that it is helping but has already been factored into the budget.

Mr. Vernau stated that as recently as 2014, the ambulance service was making a profit however, it has lost \$200,000 or more in past years. The General Fund must cover the cost of the ambulance service. We can bill other municipalities for ambulance service but all West Shore municipalities honor each other's subscriptions.

Mr. Holl said we are working on getting numbers for the costs of mutual aid we are providing. Captain Deaven is keeping track of the numbers. They plan to talk to nearby municipalities where a majority of mutual aid is given and not returned once the data is collected.

Mr. Ortenzio asked about looking at other less necessary expenses in the Township if public safety is the priority. Mr. Vernau stated that they are looked at every year. They consist of municipal building maintenance, debt service, communications, Parks and Recreation, Public Works, and salary and benefits. Mr. Holl stated that Public Safety tries to look for things that can be pushed down range and to look for savings. Mr. Ortenzio suggested that if some projects could be deferred it could cover Public Safety costs and avoid a millage increase. Mr. Villone stated that a lot of projects are already quite overdue from being pushed back. Mr. Vernau said that what the Township has to pay for services also goes up every year.

FIRE PRESENTATION SUMMARY

Chief Murdoch spoke about the challenges that the fire department is facing including staffing, apparatus, and facilities.

Staffing

Mr. Murdoch spoke about the fire and rescue services model looking like a 3 legged stool. Volunteers, PSO's, and live-ins each represent a leg. There are currently four initiatives being considered to strengthen this model with the goal of not becoming a career fire department.

1. **College Live-in Program Increase** – the fire program can currently fund four college live-ins but they would like to see this increased to eight. The college live-ins must be qualified fire fighters and meet other requirements with grades. They are then eligible for tuition reimbursement and a cost of living adjustment. Mr. Murdoch proposed that tuition reimbursement be 75% for the first semester and 100% for the second semester and beyond based on tuition costs for attending Penn State Harrisburg. Currently this is 50% and 75%, based on HACC's 2017 tuition rates. The live-ins provide availability for firefighting and emergency services to the Township, especially in the overnight hours.
2. **Volunteer Incentive Program** – this currently does not exist but investing in the volunteers helps with recruitment and retention. Younger people want immediate returns. Mr. Murdoch spoke about an incentive program currently in place in a nearby department. Participants earn points based on participation, training, and station staffing.
3. **Two additional PSO's for 2020** – Captain Wirth stated that this would provide for 24/7 consistent coverage with a qualified individuals who could drive the fire trucks. If there are live-ins on station, having a PSO on duty at night will make sure they can get out on calls. Currently PSO's are not considered essential and there may not be one on duty. He feels that the PSO's have plenty of work to do to when they are not needed on fire calls such as performing fire inspections, property maintenance, and going on EMS calls.
4. **Increase PSO Salary Rate** – Captain Wirth stated that PSO's have the qualifications of a fire fighter and an EMT. A recent salary survey of what PSO's are making came in around \$50,000 and the PSO's in Lower Allen currently make \$37,000. He proposed a tiered salary program based on qualifications. The entry level PSO would start around \$40,000 and increase as certifications are achieved. Current PSO's would receive a salary adjustment. Mr. Holl stated that the Ad Hoc Committee can make a general recommendation to the Board of Commissioners but cannot set a dollar amount as that is part of the budget.

The presentation on fire apparatus and facilities was tabled to the next Ad Hoc meeting due to time constraints.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Holl spoke about how the steps talked about tonight are stopgaps to keep the Township's fire services operational. The goal is to avoid the sizable cost of having a career fire department in Lower Allen Township. He is counting on discussions in the upcoming weeks to lead to a list of recommendations for the Board of Commissioners.

ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee is on **Tuesday August 20th at 6:00 pm at the PA American Water Headquarters, 852 Wesley Drive, Mechanicsburg.**