

Union Township Board of Supervisors  
Workshop – Police Services  
February 29, 2016

The Board of Supervisors Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Larry Spahr at 7:00p.m. The meeting was held at the Union Township Municipal Building, 3904 Finleyville-Elrama Road, Finleyville, PA. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Board Members in Attendance by roll call were Larry Spahr, Charles Trax, Paul Chasko, Heather Daerr, and Deborah Sargent. Also in attendance, Judy Taylor–Treasurer, and Debra Nigon–Secretary.

The Agenda included three speakers, Bill Tomosky on creation of a Union Township Police Department, Chief Tempest, Monongahela Police Department, and Chief Hartmann, Southwest Regional Police Department.

Bill Tomosky reviewed his qualifications and addressed the Board regarding starting its own police force together with Finleyville Boro and Nottingham Township, assuming their desire to participate. Their participation was discussed as necessary due to the cost to start-up a police force and purchase equipment, which is estimated to be about \$1.4 million dollars, the bulk of the Township's annual budget. Mr. Tomosky proposes getting together with Finleyville Boro and Nottingham Township to fund a 9 employee police force of full-time and part-time officers. He provided a written proposal to each Board member outlining the associated costs.

Monongahela Police Department is currently serving Finleyville Boro.

Mr. Spahr mentioned that, at the time the police were disbanded, over half, 61%, of the Township's budget was going to police services. The Township had to go to court and show that it could no longer afford the police coverage. Union Township prevailed despite appeal from Teamsters 205. During that hearing, the Township had to prove that it was in a financially destitute position for the court to award in its favor. Mr. Spahr noted that, between the current 12 mils the Township currently assesses to 14 mils, where the Township is capped, is a window of 2 mils which would garner only about another \$70,000, which won't even pay for one officer. Townships are mandated to take care of roads, and there has to be money left to take care of roads and replace equipment. Also, he noted many instances of being taken in for arbitration on past practice.

Mr. Spahr also commented that at the end of 2005, the DCED sent auditors in to do a complete analysis of the Township's finances. At that time, Mike Forman who was among the crew of auditors, told the Township that if did not immediately eliminate the police force, it could find itself in the middle of an Act 47 Take Over. Since the Township took action to disband, it was able to recover financially.

Mr. Spahr commented that SWRPD provides their own insurance and automobiles. The Township provides them with gasoline and with their fines to defray their costs.

In terms of Mr. Tomosky's proposal, Mr. Spahr's opinion was that the Board's decision to discuss full time coverage was to see how it could fill a gap in service and, if the Township were going to research replacing Southwest Regional, then there would be other options to pursue and police departments to consider such as Peters Township and South Park Township.

Mr. Spahr also recalled additional expenses involving the old Union Township police force, such as \$16,000 dollars to have an investigation of a police officer and legal expenses for multiple hearings before common pleas judges. The investigation ended up in the arrest of one of those officers which involved threats on women. Mr. Spahr explained that although the Township had a good chief of police, and some good officers, there were also some bad officers and it proved very difficult to eliminate a bad police officer without the sufficient burden of proof which was difficult to obtain. Mr. Smida who was in attendance, noted the solicitor's role in protecting the Township during that time.

Mr. Spahr acknowledged receiving Mr. Tomosky's resume that was included in his communications to the Board which he is assuming was supplied for informational purposes. However, he noted that although Union Township did not advertise a job, Peters Township may be hiring in the near future and that he would put in a word for him.

In regard to Mr. Tomosky's question about the recent reassessment and the possibility of additional Township funds, Mr. Spahr informed him that, when there is a reassessment, and assessments go up, the millage is reduced so that there is no windfall to any municipality. So, if the assessment goes up, then the millage will be adjusted accordingly.

Per the last budget review, the numbers show that adding an additional shift would cost about \$160,000. The Township currently has an average of two eight-hour shifts per day.

Brian Tempest, Chief of Police, City of Monongahela, provided a handout to the Board which explains how they provide their services. If the Township is interested in a price, Monongahela Police Department would be willing to quote the Township a price at some point in the future as he does not want to step on a brother who has a contract with Union Township. When the contract expires, he would be willing to discuss a price with us. He noted that he spoke to Judge Ellis who has no issues with SWRPD.

Chief Tempest, informed the Board that, in terms of the coverage they provide, they are responsible for hearings, court hearings, vehicles, and gasoline. Monongahela is a third class city. As such, the police department cannot regionalize. They can only provide services. Once a price is given that price holds and they absorb all other costs.

Chief Tempest also added that he did quote full time coverage for another municipality where they were needed to work on a drug issue at a cost of under \$350,000. However, they have not ever submitted in the past a quote to Union Township. Chief Tempest also described a period of time where he had a bad officer, much like the period of time described by Mr. Spahr, and the difficulty in seeing it but not being able to touch the officer for a long time. However, he said that, having been in that position and through that experience, he knows much better

how to guard against it in the future, much like getting a ticket one day makes you the safest driver on the road the next.

Ms. Daerr asked about the enforcement of ordinances. Chief Tempest explained that the biggest call for ordinance enforcement is in regard to junk cars. Per New Eagle's Ordinance, on the sixth day a car is towed. There is no citation. The towing company does not charge New Eagle to tow the cars but takes them for junk. The owner would be responsible for towing. On one day, there were 101 cars towed out.

Chief Hartmann provided to the Board a synopsis of his qualifications and background which includes a Master's degree and experience teaching at the Local Government Academy, teaching elected officials on police regionalization, being a published author, teaching at Penn State University for the Master's constable and sheriff's program, and other police related qualifications.

He explained that a benefit of using Southwest Regional Police is that anything happening internally within the police department, does not involve the Township. In addition, any grants provided for police services, are not significant and don't last.

He stated that Union Township is extremely important to Southwest Regional and that they are willing to work on a path towards addressing our needs. He asked the Board to let them know clearly what is wanted and they can tell them what it will cost. In terms of increasing coverage, he asked the Board to identify the highest problematic shift, and they could create a plan towards covering it.

Also, he asked the Board that when it comes to evaluating the bids to make sure that they are comparing apples to apples, and to make sure whether the police services organization is going to provide service from outside the Township or from inside.

He explained that SWRPD has eight different ways they perform ordinance enforcement. They could either initiate it or wait until they are requested to enforce it. There are towns that don't want the officers to enforce ordinances until there is a complaint. There are towns that have code enforcement personnel. Southwest Regional serves eight communities and has eight Boards to work with and customizes what they do regarding code enforcement in accordance with the desire of that municipality.

Ms. Daerr requested a more detailed monthly report so that she could determine what type of crime is going on in the Township. Chief Hartmann said that SWRPD hears a lot about traffic issues from Union Township.

Jason Jaki who attended in the audience explained that there have been a lot of thefts of weed whackers and other items from properties in his area. Chief Hartmann explained that many thefts like those he explained are usually in families and the family does not want to pursue it further. Also, he noted that there is not much they can do about items being stolen out of unlocked cars. He stated that it is rare for the police to catch crime in action and that this would involve flooding an area with extra patrols. He suggested using the shifts we currently have, or adding shifts, and using them strategically to cover an area or time slot of concern.

In terms of the canine officer, Chief Hartmann said the dog had to be decommissioned due to a bone disease.

Chief Hartmann pointed out that labor suits cost money and come out of the general fund instead of services to the Township. In this Township he said he hears a lot about traffic and thefts. In regard to drugs, they are everywhere, but, from his standpoint, he would be more concerned about thefts than the drug issue here in Union Township as there are areas where the drugs are much worse. Southwest Regional belongs to the drug task force and have their own vice teams. He can't talk about their activities but they are often passing information off to other agencies.

An audience inquired why a one-year contract was signed with the Township. The Township has always had an annual contract with Southwest Regional Police.

There was a gentleman in the audience who commented that he wanted SWRPD to be kept and that he has used them several times and they responded instantaneously and were professional.

Linda Evans-Boren said that as a past Supervisor, she was involved in the process of obtaining police coverage. The Township started with one shift per day of police coverage and the plan was to increase shifts per year; however, the Township's revenue did not increase as anticipated due to the suspension of construction. The Tuscany Estates developer recently went before the planning commission, of which she is a member, to discuss phase approval for new construction. She said that the developer is discussing construction which would add six to eight family homes and, after that, the developer is talking about phase approval for 57 or so new homes. If this takes place, new revenue will be coming into the Township.

Also, she said that, if the 1.8 million in the general fund balance and operating reserve is used to start up a police department, it may not be possible to pay them their salary in two years. Also she questioned whether the Township wanted to start managing police pensions and noted that the Township is still managing annuities left over from the last police force pension.

Ms. Evans-Boren said that she has not heard complaints. Mr. Spahr said that he has received complaints but that the overwhelming feedback has been positive.

Also, Ms. Evans-Boren asked if there would be funding for road slide repair if the Township pursued reinstating a police force. She also made comments regarding the good SWRPD did for the community and how they cleared the drug dealers out of Brownsville Park when they first came into the Township. She asked why the Board did not personally discuss the desire for 24-hour coverage with SWRPD before pursuing other avenues.

Ms. Sargent explained that the Board is simply collecting information. The next step, per Ms. Sargent, would be to ask the Board, after hearing tonight's speakers, what direction that they want to go.

*Board Approved: March 28, 2016*

Ms. Savko, 68 Aber Road, an audience member, suggested inviting others to bid to get the best price for our money or the most amount of coverage for our dollars.

Chief Hartmann commented about services that they provide free of charge, and asked the Board to remember those items when comparing coverage.

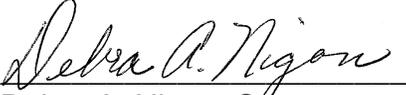
Mr. Spahr said that many residents have to become educated regarding the police services issue and commented that only a small number of residents come regularly to meetings.

Several other audience members indicated they were satisfied with SWRPD.

**Motion** at 8:45 p.m. to continue the Open Items - Review of Business Special Meeting that preceded the Police Services Workshop to another date and time to be determined.  
Motion by Charles Trax, Motion failed for lack of a second.

Motion was rescinded by Mr. Trax and Ms. Sargent who decided to continue the Open Items Special Meeting discussion until 9:30 p.m. and continue it at that time if were still deemed necessary.

The Police Services Workshop meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m. and the Special Meeting on Open Items was resumed.

  
Debra A. Nigon, Secretary