

The stated meeting of the Public Safety Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, September 6, 2017 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Commissioner Schreiber presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:13 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Commissioners SCHREIBER, DiPLACIDO, BOWMAN, SPIEGELMAN, KALINOSKI

Township Manager MANFREDI
Assistant Township Manager WEHMEYER
Township Solicitor CLARKE
Chief of Police LIVINGOOD

Also Present: LUKER, KLINE, HECKER, FARREN, MYERS, ROTHMAN, SANCHEZ, ZAPPONE, GILLESPIE, BRODSKY

MINUTES: Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve the minutes of the July 5, 2017 Public Safety Committee Meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Commissioner Schreiber noted that regarding Item PS1; street names will be included in this type of motion going forward although they are now available for public viewing.

Police Department Report:

Chief Livingood noted that Item PS1 is a compilation of a number of traffic matters and this will be the first of the department's quarterly submissions of ordinances as previously explained to the Board.

Ordinance No. 2140 – To Amend Chapter 156 “Vehicles and Traffic” Article II “Traffic Regulations” Section 10 “U-Turns and Section 14 “Stop Intersections” and Article III “Parking Regulations” Section 25 “Parking Prohibited At All Times; No Parking Between Signs; No Parking Here To Corner; Parking Prohibited Except Certain Hours; No Stopping Or Standing” and Section 28 “Special Purpose Parking Zones”

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Kalinoski to adopt Ordinance No 2140 amending Chapter 156 “Vehicles and Traffic” Article II “Traffic Regulations” Section 10 “U-Turns and Section 14 “Stop Intersections” and Article III “Parking Regulations” Section 25 “Parking Prohibited At All Times; No Parking Between Signs; No Parking Here To Corner; Parking Prohibited Except Certain Hours; No Stopping Or Standing” and Section 28 “Special Purpose Parking Zones” at the regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Commissioners on September 14, 2017.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Kline said if this will be done quarterly, will these regulations still be implemented or does it need to wait until the ordinance is passed?

Chief Livingood replied legally, the ordinance needs to be passed first. Anything that is a property safety matter will be put through as it was previously done; however, routine traffic matters will be done quarterly. The next ordinance will be in December as there are no committee meetings in January.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, asked for the street names listed in the motion to be read aloud by the Public Safety Chairperson, Commissioner Schreiber going forward.

Commissioner Kalinoski questioned whether there will be circumstances that a traffic matter would be put through sooner.

Chief Livingood replied absolutely. Any immediate traffic safety issues will be put through at the next meeting and any others waiting for the quarterly will be put with that one.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Continuation of Automated Red Light Enforcement Systems (ARLE) Program

Lt. Warner gave a power point presentation on the Abington Township Red Light Camera Program to the Board. Goal of the program is to reduce violations, crashes, crashes with injuries and fatalities. Locations of red light cameras are: Old York/Susquehanna Roads; Old Welsh/Old York Roads and Moreland/Fitzwatertown Roads, which have the highest number of crashes and are difficult to enforce by traditional methods. 82% are non-residents who commit violations. Pre-camera program; there were 136 total crashes, and after-camera program; there were 106 crashes, although there was an increase in violations in the third year from 10/16-7/17. Also, there was a technology upgrade to the cameras. Total reimbursed for administrative and overhead costs since 2013 was \$177,159 and zero cost to the taxpayers.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for the status of Township staff working with Gatso in the past two years.

Lt. Warner replied they have been very helpful and worked well with the department and Township staff. Andrew Noble of Gatso is here this evening to answer any questions.

Commissioner Spiegelman said Abington Police Department is able to enact this program because the department meets certification and accreditation criteria, but what about a radar speed enforcement program for Abington Township?

Lt. Warner replied that is held up in legislation. As of now, local law enforcement is not allowed to use radar for enforcement of speed and only permitted for State Police.

Commissioner DiPlacido asked has there been any significant increase in costs with the technology upgrade?

Lt. Warner replied no, not at this point. Based on the contract with Gatso, the agreement is that if there was any advancement in technology, there would be no additional costs to the Township during the length of the contract.

Commissioner DiPlacido asked has Gatso made a profit yet?

Andrew Noble, representative of Gatso USA, replied the program as a whole still owes us \$335,614.00, but the technology upgrade made a significant difference in two areas; tracking radar more accurately and an infrared flash was added for a third image allowing for better plate recognition during nighttime.

Commissioner DiPlacido clarified that after two years Gatso made no profit, but did so after four years? Is that correct?

Mr. Noble replied we hope so, yes.

Commissioner Kalinoski said there has been an up tick in violations; is that a pattern in other municipalities that use red light cameras?

Mr. Noble replied typically once a new program is put in place, after approximately six months, violations dropped to about 40% of where they were when they started the program. This increase is purely attributable to the technology added.

Commissioner Kalinoski questioned whether signage will be changed at the red light camera intersections.

Lt. Warner replied yes. If this moves forward, the department will do another blast education piece to commuters and residents about the red light camera program.

Commissioner Bowman commented that he has not received any complaints from residents in his ward and he likes the numbers in the presentation. Also, this program was implemented due to the size of our Township. Is that correct?

Lt. Warner replied she believes so.

Commissioner Kline said at some point even with the technology upgrade, there will be a decline in violations. Is that correct?

Mr. Noble replied he does not believe that will be the case because traffic patterns have not changed and signage is as it was before, and 2% of the violators are from out of town. Technology upgrade captures better images.

Commissioner Kline questioned whether this upgrade in technology is in other communities.

Mr. Noble replied yes.

Commissioner Kline said it was just mentioned that Gatso is seeing a decrease in violations by 40% over a period of time

Mr. Noble replied when the program first began in Abington Township, there were reductions during the first six or seven months in 2014/2015, but now it has gone up because the technology is capturing more violations that were not captured previously.

Commissioner Kline said last payment to Gatso was for the month of May, 2016, so the Township is over a year behind in paying Gatso the full amount of \$42,000 a month. He is still opposed to the program and does not understand why it is a three-year contract. He would rather see a zero contract. This was billed as a program to be a trendsetter in the State of Pennsylvania and we ended up being the only municipality other than the City of Philadelphia to have red light cameras. No other municipality in the State of Pennsylvania even knows they are eligible to have red light cameras and being pulled over by a police officer is more of a deterrent than getting a \$100 ticket including points in the mail.

Lt. Warner commented that reps of the City of Chester are coming to the Township this Friday inquiring about Abington Township's red light camera program.

Commissioner DiPlacido questioned whether 82% of nonresidents who commit violations include other zip codes such as Elkins Park, Jenkintown, etc.

Lt. Warner replied yes.

Commissioner Hecker questioned whether there has been statistical analysis of crashes pre and post program to see if there was a significant difference, and is there data on repeat offenders?

Lt. Warner replied she will report back on data of repeat offenders; however, we have not done a statistical analysis on crashes, but we can get that information.

Commissioner Schreiber questioned whether those who receive citations in the mail are repeat offenders.

Lt. Warner replied we don't have a lot of multiple offenders, but there are some.

Commissioner Gillespie commented that it is difficult for police officers to do enforcement as there is nowhere to park at these three intersections. Is that correct?

Lt. Warner replied that is correct.

Commissioner Myers said she has been in favor of the red light camera program. She has found that at these intersections, she is a more conscientious driver because when you get to the light and it is yellow you have a split second to decide to stop or go, now she stops, and she feels that makes a difference. Also, she cannot imagine that this has not helped with pedestrian safety at these intersections.

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to adopt Ordinance No. 2142, an ordinance amending Chapter 155 "Traffic Control" Article I (Automated Light Enforcement Systems) Section 155-17 (Expiration).

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any other comments from Commissioners. There were none.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, recommended looking at historic fluctuations from other intersections comparing them to the red light camera fluctuations. She asked about getting a ticket if the vehicle is partially in the intersection when the light turns red, and she suggested asking PennDOT for extended time of yellow lights

Officer Posey replied if the vehicle is behind the stop bar and the light is red and the vehicle proceeds through the intersection that is a violation. The signage is governed by PennDOT. We have put message bars out for drivers and it is also posted on the Township television channel as well as we have informed reps of Penn State, Abington Hospital, Willow Grove Mall and District Courts. PennDOT also governs timing of the yellow lights.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-1. Commissioner DiPlacido opposed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Commissioner Schreiber noted that as previously discussed and considered by the Board of Commissioners, the Volunteer Firefighter Tax Credit is tentatively scheduled for the Wednesday, October 4, 2017 Committee Meeting to provide the Fire Companies appropriate time to finalize recommendations.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any general comments relating to Public Safety.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, expressed concern that she feels there is a "lack of code enforcement" and she feels "not all crimes are investigated."

ADJOURNMENT: 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard J. Manfredi, Township Manager/Secretary

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