

The stated meeting of the Public Safety Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, October 4, 2017 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Commissioner Schreiber presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:09 p.m.

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

Township Manager MANFREDI
Assistant Township Manager WEHMEYER
Township Solicitor CLARKE
Chief of Police LIVINGOOD
Traffic Safety Officer FREED
Fire Marshal CLARK
Assistant Fire Marshal ROHRER
Fire Administrator SCHRAMM

Also Present: Commissioners LUKER, KLINE, MYERS, SANCHEZ, ZAPPONE, GILLESPIE

MINUTES: Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Kalinoski to approve the minutes of the September 6, 2017 Public Safety Committee Meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 3-0.

Police Department Report:

Chief Livingood reported that a press release was put out this afternoon regarding an arrest that was made of skimmers in which an investigation has been ongoing for a few months. A skimming device was placed on an ATM at Citizens Bank in Abington Township on Keith and Old York Roads for eight straight days during the month of August at 5:00 a.m. and was removed each evening. 170 debit accounts were compromised resulting in a substantial loss, although not to the cardholders, but for the bank

In addition, we determined that this was part of a larger operation of other banks in Abington, Upper Moreland, Springfield and Cheltenham Townships. One of Abington's Detectives traveled to New York City to meet with a Detective Squad that they have been working with via telephone for some time and search warrants were served on a few apartments in Queens. Recovered was a substantial amount of cash, gift cards and skimming equipment.

Also, presented to the Board was a portable device that officers use on the street that takes fingerprints and transmits it electronically automatically identifying individuals and it also takes photos. The department has two of these devices.

In regards to the opioid epidemic; Abington Police Officers have used Narcan 10 times resulting in seven saves and there other instances where the Second Alarmers used Narcan sometimes in concert with the police; other times on their own. To-date, unfortunately, nine people died from overdose this year.

On Friday, October 6, 2017 there will be an opioid seminar to be held at Abington-Jefferson where he will be making a presentation.

Traffic Safety Officer Freed reminded everyone that the September Traffic Safety Blitz has ended, so please remove lawn signs and store them until June. Also, during the week of October 15th, we will be working in conjunction with Abington School District where officers will be assigned to school bus routes doing enforcement on driver's passing school buses when the buses have their flashing lights on.

Commissioner Bowman asked for more detail on the fingerprinting device.

Chief Livingood replied if the motorist does not have identification, the officer takes their fingerprint and it is electronically transmitted identifying the individual.

Commissioner Schreiber questioned how it is determined who the fingerprint devices are assigned to.

Chief Livingood replied they are deployed in supervisors' vehicles in which those vehicles have more specialized equipment.

President Luker asked for the cost of the fingerprinting device.

Chief Livingood replied approximately \$4,000 each.

Commissioner Schreiber acknowledged Rich Garrett, Second Alarmers who was present to answer any questions by the Board.

Consider Proposed Ordinance No. 2143 Creating Tax Incentives for Members of the Abington Township Fire Department and Montgomery County Second Alarmers (EMS) and Motion to Advertise New Ordinance

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Kalinoski to consider proposed Ordinance No. 2143 creating Tax Incentives for members of the Abington Township Fire Department and Montgomery County Second Alarmers (EMS) and to advertise Ordinance No. 2143 for adoption at the 11/9/2017 regular public meeting.

Solicitor Clarke noted that the motion will need to be amended as the statute enabling this program requires a minimum of 30 days of advertising, so the vote to advertise will need to take place at the December 14, 2017 Board of Commissioners meeting.

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION to AMEND the MOTION to advertise Ordinance No. 2143 for adoption at the December 14, 2017 Board of Commissioners regular public meeting, seconded by Commissioner Kalinoski.

MOTION to AMEND the MOTION – PASSED 3-0.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Manager Manfredi noted that Fire Marshal Clark along with Assistant Fire Marshal Rohrer and Fire Administrator Schramm are here this evening and there were a number of meetings on this matter. Also, Ms. Lisa Scholly, who was excused this evening, should be recognized for the incredible work she did on this matter.

Fire Marshal Clark said based on guidelines received approximate cost would be \$50,000 and Second Alarmers provided a list of their volunteers. Proposed ordinance will result in approximately \$200 savings for firefighters of EIT and property taxes.

Assistant Fire Marshal Rohrer added that for the EIT, there are 132 qualified members that are eligible for a \$35,052.00 tax credit; for the property tax, there are 177 eligible members for a \$10,850.00 tax credit.

Dave Schramm noted the purpose of this program is to attract new volunteers and to retain the current volunteers as well as give incentives to our volunteers to reach the threshold set by the department for participation, so it is a tax rebate incentive program to sustain the volunteer system.

Manager Manfredi said if this ordinance passes there will be a fiscal impact to proposed 2018 budget.

Commissioner Schreiber questioned why eligibility period for 2017 calendar year shall be from January 20th through December 31st, and for 2018 and subsequent years, the eligibility period shall be from January 1st through December 31st of each calendar year. Also, referring to tax credit register; she expressed concern about personal information such as social security numbers being kept private.

Solicitor Clarke replied that is how the statute is written and that is the required information per State statute. Relevant information will be sent to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania directly from the Fire Marshal's Office/Tax Office.

Commissioner Schreiber clarified that if two volunteers live in the same household, they both receive EIT tax credit, but it is a one time only property tax credit. Is that correct?

Assistant Fire Marshal replied that is correct.

Commissioner Kalinoski commented that he agrees with this idea and thanked those who brought this before the Board, and he looks forward to voting "yes" for it.

Commissioner Myers commented that recruitment and retention is something that has been worked on for a long time and this will help with that. Is there a plan to get this information out to the public?

Dave Schramm replied we have many publications including a website and Facebook page, so the channels are in place to get this information out.

Commissioner Sanchez agrees with Commissioner DiPlacido, who was not present this evening, but asked for his statement to be read into the record as follows:

'I fully support the tax exemption motion for Abington Township Fire Department knowing that my neighbors and friends are now eligible for this makes me extremely happy let alone grateful for all that the Fire Chief of McKinley and his fire crew do for our community and it is long overdue and extremely well-deserved.'

Commissioner Schreiber added that Commissioner Spiegelman also expressed that he is in favor of this motion.

Commissioner Kline thanked Commissioner Schreiber for bringing the initial idea before the Board and to officials of the Fire Marshal's Office for their work on it. Will the figures that were put together by the Fire Marshal's Office be given to the Board prior to the Board meeting next Thursday and made available for the public?

Manager Manfredi replied yes.

Commissioner Kline asked for further clarification on Ordinance No. 2143 – Section 152-85 – Qualifying Volunteers – Item B - Joint Tax Return.

Solicitor Clarke replied it applies only to the Township portion of the EIT and not to the School District’s portion, and he does not believe that the School District is permitted to abate these taxes.

Commissioner Kline referring to Section 152-88- Real Property Tax Credit, and clarified that the person has to own the property under their name and not rent the property. Is that correct?

Solicitor Clarke replied the section of Qualified Real Property says, “A residential real property owned and occupied as the domicile of an active volunteer.”

Commissioner Kline clarified that an active volunteer is eligible for both tax credits and, regarding the 20% on property tax, is there a reason why there is no cap on that like there is on the EIT tax.

Solicitor Clarke replied volunteers are eligible for both credits, and the cap was not provided for in the legislation.

Commissioner Kline expressed concern that if the County reassess their assessment values how that will affect property taxes. Also, he asked about criteria for determining the point systems.

Manager Manfredi replied if the County does a County-wide reassessment for the first year after the property taxes there is a limit on how high it can be made. Immediately following adoption of the ordinance, a resolution would need to be adopted that sets the guidelines at the December Board meeting.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, expressed concern is that she feels the incentive is not the same for everyone and she encouraged the “Board to go to Harrisburg to work towards paying the volunteers a minimal amount that would still qualify them being a volunteer.”

MOTION as AMENDED – PASSED 3-0.

Resolution No. 17-022 - Sobriety Checkpoint Grant

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Kalinoski to authorize Township officials to accept a grant award from the Bureau of Highway Safety and Traffic Engineering in the amount of \$55,000.00 with the Township's matching portion approximately \$480.00.

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

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, commented that "in America, we have the right to not have police interruption and to be stopped for no reason."

MOTION was ADOPTED 2-1. Commissioner Bowman opposed.

Adopt Ordinance No. 2144:

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Kalinoski to adopt Ordinance No. 2144 amending Chapter 156 (Vehicles and Traffic) Article II (Traffic Regulations) Section 14 (Stop Intersections); 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 27 (Parking Time Limited). Ordinance No. 2144 will establish the following: Stop signs on Davidson Road at London Road northbound and southbound, Stop sign on Hemlock Circle northbound at Canterbury Road (east intersection), Stop sign on Hemlock Circle northbound at Canterbury Road (west intersection), Stop signs on Mill Road at Moredon Road both directions, 3-way Stop signs Sewell Lane at Cherry Lane, No Parking on the south side of Windsor Avenue from North Hills Avenue at 79 feet east of North Hills Avenue. Ordinance No. 2144 (attached) will repeal the following: Old York Road (old section) at Temple Beth Am – No Parking on Tuesday 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. and on Sunday from 10 a.m. to noon.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Commissioner Bowman clarified that a Stop sign will be installed on Mill Road down the hill at Moredon both ways. Is that correct? Also, are there many accidents at that location?

Traffic Safety Officer Freed replied that is correct, and there are a substantial amount of accidents due to sight distance coming off of Moredon Road, so an all-way Stop sign needs to be installed.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, questioned whether there were accident statistics at Mill and Moredon Roads. Also, she expressed concern that she “does not have a problem seeing right or left at the bottom of the hill so perhaps the Stop sign is in the wrong place.”

Traffic Safety Officer Freed replied there have been a number of accidents there, and although he does not have the figures at this time, this intersection does meet sight distance requirements for an all-way Stop sign.

Commissioner Kline said he discussed this intersection with Officer Freed many times about the sight distance issue coming down Moredon from Mill Road where there is a natural embankment and drivers can not see past it.

MOTION was ADOPTED 3-0.

Disposal of Unclaimed Confiscated Bicycles

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Kalinoski directing the Police Department to donate to the Bikes for Tykes Program, c/o Sussman Automotive, all unclaimed bicycles and bicycle parts which have been confiscated and are being held by the Department

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Commissioner Kalinoski commented that this is a great program, and if someone loses their bike, they should contact the police department to have it registered.

Commissioner Schreiber pointed out that a list has been made available of the bikes picked up from 2016/2017.

Commissioner Myers added that these bikes have been sitting around a long time and most are in bad condition. The employees at Sussman Automotive volunteer to fix them making them look like new and give the bikes to children who may not otherwise have one.

Commissioner Kline agreed with Commissioner Kalinoski that this is a great program.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, commented that it should be advertised that the police have “lost” bikes and they are about to be disposed of for a very good cause because she feels that “everyone does not know to go to the police if they lost a bike.”

Manager Manfredi clarified that in regards to this agenda item, there is a complete list of bikes as noted in a memo from Mr. Sands to Chief Livingood dated, September 20, 2017 posted online available for the public.

MOTION was ADOPTED 3-0.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any general comments relating Public Safety.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, asked for the list of bikes to be sent to the public via email and Commissioner’s letters. Also, she feels a “Stop sign at Moredon Road will not solve the problem.”

ADJOURNMENT: 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard J. Manfredi, Township Manager/Secretary

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