

MINUTES OF THE DUMONT POLICE COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING OF
JULY 18, 2011

The meeting was called to order in the Borough Hall second floor conference room by Mayor Matthew P. McHale at 5:30pm, and made the Sunshine Law announcement that the meeting was an open public meeting that was properly advertised and published as required by law.

The Mayor presided over the meeting as an Ex-Oficio member of the committee.

Present at the meeting were Mayor McHale, Police Committee Chair Ellen Zamechansky, Police Committee Members Harry Stylianou and Council President Carl Manna, and Borough Administrator John Perkins. Borough Attorney Gregg Paster attended and acted as Clerk for the evening.

The Mayor began the meeting with a discussion of the reasons for the meeting. Chief Venezia had submitted a memo for the committee's review and information, dated 7/11/11, detailing the productivity of the police department in terms of summonses and violations issued year over year, in support of the continuation of the 12 hour shift system currently in use by the department. The meeting was a six month review of the 12 hour shift system as called for in the current PBA/Borough Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). The meeting was also convened to discuss the process for pursuing promotions in the department as there is a shortage of superior/supervising officers brought on by two recent retirements.

Chairwoman Zamechansky reported that the 12 hour shift is yielding positive results overall. In reviewing the Chief's report and the supporting data, it is apparent that the parking violations are disproportionately high in the winter months. Also, certain tours and superior officers tend to exhibit greater overall productivity than others on a regular basis. The Chair is seeking a breakdown of violations from established roadblock checkpoints vs. routine patrol stops, to determine the effectiveness of the checkpoints.

Council President Manna stated that enforcement appears inconsistent a year and a half into the 12 hour shift contract. He further remarked that based upon prior experience seat belt and cell phone violations tend to result in additional violations being detected and that more stops for these types of infractions would likely increase overall police productivity. He noted that productivity took a major jump in June of 2010.

The Borough Administrator added that temporarily assigned supervisors who are not of higher formal rank than the other patrol officers are reluctant to order that more summonses be issued, which cuts in favor of pursuing the promotions process.

At that point, the Mayor called for discussion of an action plan. Councilman Manna asserted that additional superior officers are needed to manage the shifts which will increase productivity, and he recommended proceeding with the promotions process.

Councilman Stylianos questioned the wisdom of promotions with layoffs looming as a fiscally required possibility. The Borough Administrator answered that each shift squad requires a supervising officer, regardless of the number of patrol officers on duty. As such, it was his opinion that notwithstanding the possibility of layoffs, the promotions process should proceed. Councilman Stylianos mentioned that other area towns, namely Oradell, are able to operate their departments with no top brass, very effectively. The Mayor noted that while he is unfamiliar with the operations and rank structure of the Oradell force, that Dumont is far more populous and demographically diverse than many surrounding municipalities and any comparison must be 'apples to apples'.

Councilman Stylianos then asked what the function of the detective bureau is. It was explained that the detective bureau investigates and follows up prosecutions for domestic violence, which is a quietly pervasive problem in the Borough, juvenile, drug and other offenses that require such action. The bureau also interfaces with the County Prosecutor's office on indictable offenses originating within the Borough, as well as complaints on the trial track and such like police activity. Council President Manna noted that the detective assignments are temporary and function at the Chief's discretion.

Mr. Perkins remarked that with the 12 hour shifts, more police activity can be performed in a single shift, with radar patrols, checkpoints, etc. possible in addition to response to calls for assistance, medical calls, etc. Councilman Manna offered the opinion that with a little more effort, summonses and violations issued could be significantly increased.

The Mayor then asked for a consensus to recommend commencing the promotions process to the full Governing Body. He noted the time frame that if the process begins immediately, a test could be administered in September, a list of potential candidates developed by November/December following Fall interviews, and the promotions could be effectuated prior to the end of the year, since three new members will be joining the Governing Body in January with very little background or knowledge of the department functions and the promotions process.

There was a general discussion of leaving a Lieutenant's position unfilled as a fiscal consideration, since there does not appear to be a significant need for another Lieutenant at this time.

Whereupon, the meeting was opened to the public. No members of the public wishing to be heard, the meeting was then closed to the public.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, a motion to adjourn was offered by Council President Manna at 6:22pm, a second was offered by Chairwoman Zamechansky, and the motion passed by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregg F. Paster-Borough Attorney