

Borough of Tenafly

MAYOR AND COUNCIL

SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MINUTES

TUESDAY, November 30, 2010

The meeting was called to order 7:32 P.M. with the reading of the Open Public Meetings Act statement by Mayor Rustin.

Present: Mayor Peter S. Rustin

Council members: Anthony Barzelatto (arrived at 7:36 p.m.),
Nadia LaMastra, Michael Lattif, Joseph McDermott
(left at 9:00 p.m.), Patrick J. Rouse,
Jon Warms (arrived at 7:40 p.m.)

Borough Administrator: Jewel Thompson-Chin
Borough Attorney: William R. McClure, Esq.
Chief Financial Officer: Gene Vinci
Chief of Police: Michael Bruno

Absent: None

Mayor Rustin read the following statement:

"**Public Comments:** A total of 15 minutes has been allocated for this purpose. Citizens are welcome to address the Mayor and Council on any governmental item of concern to them, whether or not it is scheduled on the agenda below. Citizens must give their names and addresses when recognized to speak. Large groups are urged to select someone to represent them. The public is advised that these meetings are recorded and are subject to the Open Public Records Act."

No one came forward.

Mayor Rustin explained that the original purpose of this meeting was to discuss the 2011 Budget. However, due to the retirement of several higher ranking police officers, the agenda has been amended to include a presentation from the Chief of Police, Michael Bruno.

Presentation by Police Chief Bruno

Functions and Staffing Needs of the Tenafly Police Department.

Chief Michael Bruno explained that two captains have retired, a sergeant will be retiring in March, and a lieutenant has announced plans to retire in the summer of 2011. He stated that he is simply looking to maintain the current table of organization and staffing levels. The current structure provides task-specific supervisors and a very clear chain of

command. He then presented the current table of organization; there are 2 captains, 4 lieutenants, 7 sergeants, 22 patrolmen, 7 civilians (4 full-time dispatchers, 1 part-time dispatcher, 1 traffic maintenance worker, and 1 administrative assistant) and 26 crossing guards.

Chief Bruno pointed out that the two captain positions make up 2/3 of his administration, an administration that is already leaner than most. He discussed each of the captain's individual responsibilities as well as their shared responsibilities and explained that two captains are necessary to provide three separate points of view when dealing with personnel and internal affairs issue providing balance and fairness to every situation. He also pointed out that having three administrative positions allows for readily available administrative coverage for all three shifts.

Chief Bruno then addressed the retirement of his records sergeant. He explained that this position serves a dual role as a floating supervisor. In other words, not only does this sergeant handle OPRA requests, discovery requests, and supervises the municipal court function, he also fills vacancies in the schedule as a floating supervisor which in turn, reduces overtime. This position has saved the Borough approximately \$21,000 in 2010 by filling in supervisory vacancies without the use of overtime.

Chief Bruno highlighted the many other ways in which the current staffing helps to reduce costs. He stated that the supervisors have multiple responsibilities, most of which help to reduce or eliminate the need to hire outside contractors. For example, State-mandated training has more than quadrupled in recent years. He has officers who have received their certification as training instructors, allowing all training to be conducted in-house. Other cost-savings come from the use of compensatory time as opposed to overtime resulting in a savings of \$200,000/year, scheduling flexibility saving \$81,000 in overtime, and low sick time use. He explained that out of the 22 patrolmen, one officer is assigned to a temporary position in the detective and another in the traffic bureaus. Those officers are used to fill in vacancies within a squadron to avoid gaps that create overtime problems. He feels that by doing so, it provides additional staffing with no additional personnel needed and at the same time, provides the department with a higher percentage of cross-trained officers. The Chief can then gauge whether an officer will function well in that specific area. It also provides additional criteria for promotional assessments based on the officer's total capability and experience. He believes that any reduction in staff will affect these cost savings significantly.

Chief Bruno finished by stating that he is simply looking to preserve the functional structure of the Police Department. He pointed out that for a resident who is paying \$10,000/year in taxes, only \$531 is used to fund the Police Department. He believes that his organization is already very lean and his staffing levels are exactly at the national average. Although demands on the department have significantly increased, there is only one more officer on staff than there was 25 years ago. He has already lost one police officer and one part-time dispatcher through attrition and asked that any further attrition be kept to a minimum.

Follow-up Discussion with Mayor and Council
Police Staffing Options and 2011 Budget Impact.

C. Lattif questioned whether there was a model used to set up the current table of organization. Chief Bruno responded that he did not follow a model, but simply tried to make the organization more efficient and increase capabilities.

CE Honig asked Chief Bruno to explain why he was not in favor of shared services. Chief Bruno stated that he is not against shared services, but believes that the level of service offered now would need to be maintained. In order to determine whether it would work, a feasibility study would need to be conducted.

Mayor Rustin asked Chief Bruno to explain the use of compensatory time in lieu of overtime compensation. Chief Bruno explained that when an officer is brought to work outside of his normal hours, instead of receiving monetary compensation at one and a half times their regular rate, they are able to schedule time off. He believes that the use of compensatory time is a sign of cooperation from his police officers.

C. LaMastra asked if the new captains would come from within the ranks and if so, how the promotion process would work. Chief Bruno responded that they always try to promote from within and they backfill in order to maintain the current structure. He explained that either a sergeant or lieutenant can be promoted to captain, but the tendency is to promote a lieutenant to captain and a sergeant to lieutenant.

C. Barzelatto questioned how the department would be affected if the position of captain were eliminated. Chief Bruno pointed out the negative consequences such as eliminating the checks and balances, affecting the chain of command, and eliminating another promotional opportunity. He then highlighted some of the positives such as a reduction in costs, greater pool of candidates for chief, and the promotion process being put back in the hands of the Police Department. Chief Bruno then suggested instead of eliminating the captain position, to create a salary range within the ordinance.

C. Warms expressed his opinion that many of the responsibilities assigned to the captain positions could be performed by a civilian at a much lower salary.

Mrs. Thompson-Chin handed out a spreadsheet on the 2011 police budget proposals presenting 5 different options for the hiring/promotion process. C. Barzelatto pointed out that these numbers can be affected if there is a promotion of sergeant to captain, with a significant reduction in the budget impact. He also suggested mandating that the new patrolmen be academy-trained to help reduce costs. Chief Bruno added that it is definitely an option that he is willing to consider being that there are 30 alternate-route candidates. Council felt that there may have been an error in the spreadsheet going from Option 3 to Option 4 and asked that the CFO look at those numbers.

CE Honig asked whether a study funded by the Department of Justice can be conducted to determine the number of officers necessary for a population the size of Tenafly as well as the proper ratio of captains to officers. The Chief responded that he would cooperate with any study that the Council decided was necessary.

C. Lattif questioned how the Borough is compensated for the use of police officers for their presence during construction, mutual aid calls, and special events in town. Chief Bruno explained that the officer is compensated directly by the contractor when they are requested during construction and in requests for mutual aid, the Borough may or may not be reimbursed but it is a give and take situation. As far as special events, Council agreed to look into how officers are paid for special events in town and whether the group holding the event should be charged.

Council agreed that time is of the essence and another meeting is necessary to further discuss staffing options for the Tenafly Police Department as well as the salary ordinance. Council tentatively agreed to add a special session to the Public Meeting of December 14th.

Budget Meeting Agenda Topics:

Overview of Potential Savings for 2011 Budget.

Mrs. Thompson-Chin distributed a spreadsheet on 2011 Budget Reductions. Because of time constraints, there was not a discussion on this topic, but instead Mrs. Thompson-Chin and Mr. Vinci gave a brief overview of this handout. Although the first column should be an accurate reflection of reductions in the budget, they explained that the numbers in the second column may be affected by the decisions of the governing body. Mr. Vinci noted that the numbers will also be affected by the new assessments that result from the revaluation.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, on a motion from C. LaMastra, seconded by C. Rouse, and all present voting in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lissette Aportela-Hernandez