

MINUTES
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 1, 2026

The Penn Township Public Safety Committee convened on Tuesday, September 1, 2026, at 6:00 pm. Chairman Heiland and Commissioners Arnold, Baile, Elksnis (by phone), and Rice were present. Also present were Township Manager Sweeney, Township Engineer Bortner, WWTP Superintendent Lank, Zoning Officer LeFevre, Asst. to the Engineer Garrett, Township Secretary Miller, Chief Merwede, Police Lieutenant Shearer, Deputy Chief Wysocki, and EMA Waltman. The following items were discussed:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Chairman Heiland announced that there was an executive session held on Monday, August 17, 2026, following the Board of Commissioners meeting to discuss personnel matters. There will also be an executive session this evening following the Health and Sanitation Committee meeting to discuss personnel matters.

Chairman Heiland announced that Commissioner Elksnis was not physically present but was participating by cell phone.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

The minutes of the previous Public Safety Committee meeting were approved as written.

CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

There were no citizen comments.

POLYGRAPH/VSA TRAINING:

Chief Merwede reported on polygraph training, which takes twelve weeks to complete. Once the training is complete, equipment must be purchased at a cost of between \$7,000 and \$12,000. Most users prefer the equipment priced closer to \$12,000.

There is a Voice Stress Analysis training course in Pittsburgh that costs less than \$2,000. The course is one weeklong. Once the training is complete, the software is provided at no cost. The cost is paid through criminal justice grants provided by Baker Group International. Both Northern York and York City Police Departments use voice stress analysis. The hope is to send Officer Derek Malec to the training at the end of the month.

CONSORTIUM TESTING:

Chief Merwede reported that consortium testing is scheduled for September 12th and 19th. As of August 26, 2026, there were 17 people registered.

REPLACEMENT OF A PATROL VEHICLE:

Chief Merwede reported that Unit 15 is quickly approaching 100,000 miles. It currently has 97,000

miles. This is one of the vehicles scheduled for replacement next year. Chief Merwede would like to start the replacement process now, with the hope that the new vehicle will arrive in January. There is money in this year's budget should the vehicle arrive early. The Committee recommended Chief Merwede move forward with starting the replacement of Unit 15.

CAMERAS AT TOWNSHIP PARKS:

Chief Merwede reported on the proposed installation of security cameras at Kids' Kingdom and Young's Woods. Each park would have four cameras strategically located to provide appropriate coverage of the facilities and surrounding areas. The equipment would be installed in secure locations and protected from the elements. The cameras require a router and Verizon service at a cost of \$45 per month per park. The camera system would be accessible at Police Headquarters and via authorized mobile devices. The Board agreed that the project should move forward as soon as possible, with the equipment to be purchased through the Recreation Fund. The current video surveillance policy may need to be revised, and appropriate signage may be posted at the parks. The Committee recommended Chief Merwede move forward with getting the cameras placed in the parks.

2027 POLICE BUDGET:

Chief Merwede reviewed some highlights of the proposed 2027 Police Budget. The hope is to hire two new officers for 2027. Justification for two new officers includes replacing an anticipated retiree, helping to keep overtime costs down, providing additional coverage during vacations, injuries, and/or training, addressing increased call volume and speeding concerns, and providing additional manpower. The cost for each officer is roughly \$130,000 per year.

Supplies have increased for next year. The alarm monitoring fee has also increased for 2027 because the key fob system and alarm system were upgraded, including the addition of alarms for the evidence and arms rooms.

The Cellebrite Program is proposed for 2027. Detective Gebhart was recruited by the U.S. Secret Service two years ago to attend Cellebrite training in Alabama. Cellebrite is used to extract information contained on an unlocked mobile phone and other digital devices. The training was free, including travel, room, and board. At the end of the training, he received \$20,000 worth of software, a \$4,000 laptop, and a Faraday box for the Police Department. Cellebrite could be used at no cost for two years, and those two years are coming to an end. Detective Gebhart has used Cellebrite in over 22 cases.

The Motorola Drone Program is proposed for 2027. This program is intended to modernize response capabilities, maximize officer safety, and protect the community more efficiently. It would change how high-risk situations, search and rescue operations, and searches for missing children or vulnerable seniors are handled, potentially reducing response times from hours to minutes. The closest drone program has a response time of at least an hour, if not more. It would help with de-escalation by providing real-time visual data during high-risk standoffs and could help resolve conflicts peacefully without sending officers into a situation blindly. It would improve officer safety by mapping dangerous terrain or clearing the exterior of a building before sending officers into a potentially dangerous situation. It could also assist with disaster response by assessing structural damage, flooding, and hazardous chemical spills safely from a distance.

There will be no random surveillance. All operators will be trained in accordance with FAA regulations, and there will be strict protocols for flight logs and data storage. The proposed equipment is compatible with the Department's current body-worn and in-car camera systems. The cost is \$20,000 for three years. The program provides repairs and drone replacement at no cost. It also provides free software and hardware upgrades during the plan. It can be controlled by someone at a desk using a computer or handheld unit. The videos can be viewed from mobile phones or computers. It has GPS capabilities and a loudspeaker that can be used to announce messages to a crowd. The drone would be primarily for Penn Township use but could be used to assist other agencies during emergency situations.

The addition of two more speed signs and a server upgrade are also proposed for 2027.

REVIEW OF FIRE COMMISSION MEETING:

Deputy Chief Wysocki began with a reminder that all Fire Commission meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. at 204 Clover Lane in the lower-level meeting room. Information, dates, agendas, and minutes can all be found at 79fire.com and are linked to the municipal website.

The Commission's revenue is approximately 6.2% above budget, and expenses are about 9.1% over budget. EMS revenue is about 13.1% above budget, and expenses are about 10% over budget. Reasons for the increased expenses include increases in call volume, products, placements, use, patient care, and personnel costs associated with increased community needs.

The Finance and Personnel Committees will be seeking approval for a part-time and full-time paramedic following resignation. Part-time Paramedic Shoemaker is being welcomed to the team. The full-time position will close on the 5th, and the successful candidate will be announced thereafter.

Facilities and Apparatus: Crews will be leaving at 3:00 a.m. for the final inspection of the new Engine 793 in Appleton, Wisconsin. The Verizon phone system has been upgraded at all four locations: the Chief's Office, Clearview, Wirt Park Station, and Clover Lane Station. It is a significant overhaul and will be beneficial for improved communication between the locations. The new engine is expected to arrive two to three weeks after the final inspection.

The next Fire Commission meeting is September 17, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

OPERATIONAL DEPARTMENT UPDATE:

An increase in call volume is expected with cold and flu season starting. There are also parades and other events coming up that will increase activity for fire and emergency services over the next few months.

CONDITIONAL OFFER TO A FF CANDIDATE:

The Penn Township Police Department handled background investigations on the top three candidates. Candidate Number Two is being recommended to the Board for conditional approval pending successful completion of polygraph and psychological testing. Candidate Number Two brings a particular skill set and has certifications that will eliminate the need for him to attend the academy. The Committee gave a favorable recommendation and will be added to the Board of Commissioners meeting agenda.

2027 FIRE BUDGET:

Deputy Chief Wysocki reported on some of the highlights of the proposed 2027 Fire Budget. The salaries reflect a request for a 17th firefighter. The Department is facing potential retirements, with nine firefighters eligible for retirement by 2031. The total cost of a firefighter per year is over \$63,728.

The pension contribution has increased.

Hydrant rental costs are increasing. Hanover Borough owns the hydrant system. Penn Township pays to utilize the public hydrant system for emergency services. The hydrant repairs line item provides funding for the replacement of existing hydrants and the addition of new hydrants.

EMA UPDATE:

Mr. Waltman reported on his activities for the month of August, which included attending National Night Out, continuing education courses and a Halloween parade planning meeting, developing a revised Chili Cookoff EAP, and monitoring several storm events.

OTHER MATTERS:

There were no other matters to discuss.

CITIZEN'S COMMENTS TO COMMITTEE REGARDING DISCUSSION ITEMS:

There were no citizen comments.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon M. Miller
Township Secretary