

**Regional Police Development Committee
North Cornwall Township & North Lebanon Township
November 16, 2023**

Call to Order:

The November 16, 2023, meeting of the Regional Police Development Committee was called to order at 3:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. In attendance were Gerald Simpson, Police Consultant/Public Services Instructor, PA-DCED; Anne Weaver Morrow, Local Government Policy Specialist, PA-DCED; Daniel Bost, District Director for Senator Gebhard; Tom Long, NCT Manager; Justin Thompson, NCT Assistant Manager; Mike Wahmann, NCT Supervisor, Ron Sell, NCT Supervisor; Lori Books, NLT Manager, Chief Timothy Knight, NLT Police Department, Arden Snook, NLT Supervisor, and Gary Heisey, NLT Supervisor. Absent was Chief Harry Ward, NCT Police Department.

Others in attendance are listed on the sign-in sheet.

Discussion:

Ms. Weaver Morrow began the discussion with a summary of the timeline of events leading up to this meeting. She then presented the committee with the Regional Police Guide. Mr. Simpson will provide technical assistance with the steps detailed in the guide. There are 3 phases within the guide: Phase 1 – Charter Agreement, Phase 2- Implementation, and Phase 3 – Evaluation Period.

Charter Agreement:

The Regional Steering Committee is in Phase 1 and will begin to discuss a contract or charter agreement. Mr. Simpson advised that to begin, the committee first identify what issues may be obstructions to regionalization and work out those complications first. Mr. Simpson offered that governance and length of term of commission should be considered as potential hurdles. Payment and revenue distribution should also be items discussed early in Phase 1. Although these meetings are open to the public, he urged the committee to provide detailed updates at the Supervisor's meetings.

Once the charter agreement is agreed upon, then the committee and police departments should begin to discuss what the merger looks like in terms of office record keeping and merging those systems.

Discussion:

Mr. Heisey asked Mr. Simpson why more police departments have not regionalized. Ms. Weaver Morrow replied that some do not want to give up control, i.e., egos. Mr. Wahmann added that the goal should be to give your community the best police services for dollars spent, in the most economical way.

The committee also discussed how a regionalized police department might fail. Failure of a police commission to work together was cited. Mr. Simpson suggested having a commission of odd numbers of members and to rotate the majority control/tie breaker. Currently, the North Lebanon and North Cornwall Township Police Departments are similar in size, contracts, and pay.

Mr. Heisey stated he had conversations with NLTPD officers, and he shared their concerns with the committee. Losing rank and a reduction in pay were the most common concerns. Mr. Simpson reiterated that no one goes back in pay, because pay rate is part of their contract. Regarding having multiple high-ranking officers, this situation can be worked out, and it is not the biggest hurdle. Mr. Heisey then asked for clarification regarding the gap in coverage of contracts – from current to regionalized contracts– and if someone may be fired from their position at that time. Mr. Simpson said no. Discussion followed.

The committee has copies of charter agreements from 4 other regional police departments and will review them and discuss them at the next few meetings. Mr. Long suggested committee members continue to consider what may be hurdles to overcome and send those items to Chief Knight so they can be discussed at the next meeting.

Public Comment:

Mike Webster, from North Lebanon, inquired about the charters that the committee will be reviewing and where they can be found. They can be found online on their websites.

Jim Cikovic, North Lebanon, asked if regionalization can be put on a ballot for the taxpayers to vote on. It cannot. Mr. Simpson inquired about his concerns. Mr. Cikovic stated that police departments are a large part of Township budgets and due diligence should be done.

Rick Blouch, North Lebanon, said it is important for the Townships to be very transparent with the residents and provide updates at monthly meetings. An afternoon meeting makes it difficult for people who work to be able to attend. It is also possible people are not aware that these meetings are taking place. The response from the committee was that the meetings are advertised in the newspaper, posted on their websites and on digital signs. Mr. Bost encouraged the committee to hold an evening meeting after the charter agreement is drawn up.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Regional Police Development Committee will be held on December 13, 2023, at 3:00 PM. The location is the North Cornwall Township Municipal Building, 330 S. 18th Street, Lebanon PA.

Adjournment:

The meeting concluded at 4:07 p.m.