

**Village Board of Trustees
Special Meeting – Future
of Police Department
Wednesday September 28, 2022**

MAYOR TRAVER CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6:00 PM.

Roll Call	Trustee Boucher	Trustee Carpenter	Trustee Cutler	Trustee Williams
Attorney	Matt Fuller			
Clerk	Janelle Rose			
	Sheriff Jeff Murphy			

**SPECIAL MEETING
Fort Edward Fire House**

The mayor started the meeting by inviting Sheriff Jeff Murphy to explain his presentation to the residents.

- Sheriff Murphy – The village is in a very difficult situation, and we are here to offer our service to you as well as any other village. Since our office has been helping the village out, we have been very busy with calls. Having a plan is very important and if the village and the county have a contract, there would be a car for coverage in the village. The handout Sheriff Murphy brought shows what they have now. The call volume for the more serious there is specialized units. Each car is equipped to do a case from start to finish. The handout shows the areas of coverage, North being Kingsbury, Fort Edward, North Argyle and Fort Ann. The middle being Argyle, Hartford, and Granville. South being Salem. The handout shows what the county could assist with for Fort Edward. Two deputies for the 5 am to 7 pm shift and another two deputies for 7 pm to 3 am.
From 3 am to 7 am coverage would be between cars on duty by sheriff and state. Call reports show that there is not a lot of activity during this time frame. There are on call officers as well as administration. The sheriff's department has 22 staff daily, Monday through Friday.
- Tom Plude – How does the Sheriff budget compare to the village budget for the police department? The mayor explained the budgeted amount and projection over the next four years. Sheriff Murphy's presentation handout shows the cost for 4 deputies for the village for the two shifts. Tom asked Sheriff Murphy if they have any other contracts with villages. Sheriff Murphy explained they did have a contract with Salem, but no longer. Salem ended the contract because the sheriff and state coverage was sufficient.
- Josh Plude – Is the turnover in the department due to the rate of pay? Maybe if the pay was higher, people would stay. Mayor Traver explained that that could be part of it. Is there any money out there to help with this cost?
- Frank Burkhardt – does that budget amount include training? Yes. Vehicles? No. Would you need the village vehicles? Yes. Does the North car have to answer to the village? No, an FE car will be here in the village, contracted.
- Mayor Traver explained the new accreditation changes for police departments.
- Attorney Fuller explained that the budgets mentioned do not include the cost for accreditation changes going into effect. The definition of legislature changed and if the FE Department stayed, the village would have until October of 2023 to finalize all the changes to the accreditation.
- Sheriff Murphy explained that they did the accreditation and put policies in place, had oversight, testing, administration. For smaller departments, this is a big task. They are making it more difficult to "police". The administrative side would include assistants, chief, lieutenant. Right now, FE does not follow the new accreditation which can cause major issues.
- Mayor Traver explained that the projection sheet over the next three, four years does not include what it would cost for the accreditation for administrative duties. From a financial standpoint, what can we afford without sacrificing safety. We could ask the sheriff's department for 24-hour coverage, but 20 hours is sufficient. The village has been struggling for the last 8 years to keep the department to full staff and it has been very difficult. We are not sure if it is going to get any better. If there is more money offered, it may be harder for a young kid to turn money and more opportunity away.
- Attorney Fuller suggested with the money savings, the village should consider beefing up Code Enforcement. It will help with the quality-of-life issues and a lot of the calls start with Code.
- Bob Haley – How long will this transition take? Right now, there are a lot of fights and drugs on the streets. The mayor and sheriff are not sure. This must be determined by the village board, then the county board. After that, it will have to

- go into contract negotiations and a public hearing.
- Sheriff Murphy stated that they have a drug task force and if there are any drugs here in the village, they already know about it. The task force is a robust force and involves many agencies.
 - Frank Burkhardt – Would this go to a public vote? No, it would be a permissive referendum. Attorney will put together a collective bargaining. There will be a local law and a public hearing subject to a permissive referendum. Attorney stated that the village board has the power to vote themselves.
 - Chris Kyne – asked about having a department like Stillwater. They have days and evenings covered, then at night the sheriff's take over. The mayor said they could but did not look at that. The board does not feel comfortable having a hybrid department.
 - Steve Huntington feels that having one agency is important. Know more of what is going on and more continuity. Steve also said that even the Washington county investigators have been helping the village out.
 - Mayor Traver introduced Steve after his statement as being our longest officer currently. The mayor stated that the chief would stay on for a while until all of this is worked out. The staff now are all doing great on their own with the help of the county as back up. The senior full-time guy that we currently have has only been with the department for 2.5 years.
 - Tim Morency – A lot of guys left because of the administration in the department. He feels like having our own department is better for the FE residents.
 - Mayor Traver mentioned that since 2015 we have only had 4 FE guys and now none of them are here. It is important to make sure we have the quality of life which includes events, parades, etc. Tim Morency asked if the station would still be used. The mayor said the call box would stay there for walk-ins.
 - Nicole Brown stated it sounds like the village board has their minds made up. Mayor Traver said “no we do not, that is why we are here. If you all were jumping up saying save the department, we will do everything we can to save it.”
 - Bill Brown gave a scenario that if there is no one from 3 am – 7 am on duty in the village and there is a call, but the sheriff is north and the state is south, there is no one to come to the call.
 - Phil Lindsey explained that the civil service list lately is not a big list like it used to be. Right now, there are maybe 10 people who took the test and are on the list.
 - Vicki Plude – mentioned that she does not know anyone in the department anymore. She would like to see familiar faces and the residents need more assurance, more police and more back up.
 - Bob Haley asked if the pay is comparable to other villages like us. Yes, it is. We do not even come close to the bigger counties.
 - Sue Sheehan – There is no advancement here. Officers must patrol here forever before moving up and you can only move to sergeant or chief.
 - Mayor Traver wants close knit protection, neighborhood watch and familiar faces all the time.
 - Josh Plude – asked if the part time officers get OT. No, they do not.
 - Tom Plude – asked if the village could have 24-hour coverage. Mayor and Sheriff said it is possible.
 - Sheriff Murphy – if you have 4 to cover a 20-hour period, you will need 6 for a 24-hour period. Most of the calls and patrol from the sheriff's department is on the weekends and is very busy. This plan will work, however if the village decides to go, the county will be available no matter what to help the community. Right now, is not efficient and the plan for the county is more beneficial. This contract would be reviewed every year.
 - Sue Malvuccio – We deserve 24-hour coverage.
 - Tom Wolfe stated we need our officers in house as it is better for drug use and Od's.
 - Christopher Boucher – there is no one on the list these days like it used to be. We used to see like 50 people on the list at one time. I would like to see the FE Police stay.
 - Sue Sheehan – These are mandated changes however legislature does not even understand them yet. The final regulations aren't complete yet.
 - Sheriff Murphy explained that the Professional Police Act is any use of force, brandishes weapon, taser, its reported to the state. Discovery oversees every case across the desk to the DA. All cases have video and body cameras for the case and needs to be downloaded to Discovery. The state is making it very difficult to be in this line of business. The DA also has access to all the body cam information.
 - Ed Carpenter, one of the committee members for the department said he's been trying to keep the department going and the committee has been trying to help as much as possible. We have hired, and people leave. It has been impossible to keep people for the last 2+ years. 2016 is when the department started to suffer.
 - Trustee Williams stated he has been on the board for 20 years and the police department is part of our community, however we are not Maybury anymore.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Janelle Rose Village Clerk/Treasurer

Dated: September 28, 2022