

Village Board of Trustees

**Public Hearing
Monday, February 6, 2023**

MAYOR TRAVER CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6:30 PM.

Roll Call	Trustee Boucher	Trustee Carpenter	Trustee Williams	
Absent	Trustee Cutler			

Public

Jeanie Mullen, Steve Davie, Caton Deuso, Phil Lindsey, Mitch Suprenant, Peter Amorosi, Mike Dickinson, Andrew Percetti, Tim Morency, Patty Morency
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PUBLIC HEARING

➤ **Abolish Fort Edward Police Department**

The mayor opened the meeting explaining the reason for us being here tonight. A proposed adoption to abolish the Fort Edward Police Department. Mayor Traver also explained to the public that a contract with the Washington County Sheriff's Office and Village of Fort Edward would ensure specific patrolling in the village. The contract with the county will be an annual contract agreement and either or both parties can opt out at any time. Mayor Traver explained that the sheriff's department has a lot more to offer with more programs for the residents, they work with the fire departments in the county. The village could not keep officers here for the long haul as they all wanted to better themselves and make more money. It seemed like a steppingstone for some. Our part-time workforce was down to three officers who could only work one shift per month. The village was up against the pay grade against Washington County and surrounding police departments. To rebuild a department there would have to be an increase in the number of officers, a rate that is comparable to the surrounding departments. Seven (7) full-time officers would be needed as well as a chief and sergeant. The current budget would more than double and after three years, the police budget would approach a million dollars. The mayor explained that there is no signed contract in place yet. It has to go before a couple of boards at the county level after the public hearing. The village police budget for the future should the department officially dissolve would consist of a line item to pay the county as well as a line item for our crossing guards and any utility bills that need to be paid. Overall, the village board of trustees is looking at a \$200k reduction in the budget.

A public resident Michell Suprenant and former police chief for the village stated he had a concern about being short staffed at the county, would they take away from deputy assigned to the village. The mayor explained that we will have a contract in place that would not allow them to be taken away from the village. Should the deputy in the village be closer to respond, they will respond and fill the gap between his arrival and when another sheriff arrives. Mitch Suprenant also noted that the sheriff's office is accredited and the FEPD would not be able to get to that point. A Chief Administrator would have to be hired for the department as well, increasing the budget even more.

The mayor explained that there would still be an office in the department for walk-ins.

A public resident Tim Morency, also a former police officer agrees that FE is used as a steppingstone to move up. Officers did not care for the former chief and sergeant in his opinion. Back in the day, people stayed. It was a good department and the officers were home grown, now we do not know anyone.

The mayor brought up a point that the dollar amount is a big reason for this change. The big driving force is the rate of pay here vs. in the counties. The workforce in general has changed immensely.

A public resident Patty Morency also voiced her concerns with the response times when a call comes in.. She explained an experience on her street where she heard someone screaming outside saying "help me". She called 911 and said they arrived 9 minutes later.

Again, the mayor explained the response time will not be that long with officers assigned to stay within the village lines, just the same as we would get with our own department.

Trustee Carpenter gave us his take on this situation. As a committee member for the department, he noticed that the village could not keep up with the staffing. The former chief was looking for people once a week for interviews and the overtime was unreal with the full-time officers we had.

Trustee Boucher stated that our part time officers were not from around here. We had to jump through hoops to get PT officers.

Trustee Williams also wanted to keep the force as in the 80's. Over the last 3-4 years, there was always part time issues and extending hours to cover shifts. It has been very hard.

Mitch Suprenant elaborated to that and agreed that back in the 80's and 90's there was always part time officers available. Times have changed a lot. Our officers also could do things back then that they could not do now with cameras, etc. They are under a microscope.

Mayor Traver said with benefits, 7-8 officers 7 days a week and raise salary to be competitive, our budget would more than double.

The post star representative asked if the village would maintain the equipment.

Steve Huntington explained that the sheriff is taking the new car and the two old cars; one would be passed on to one of our other departments and the other would be surplus to sell.

The post star representative asked with the \$200k freed up, was there any discussion as to what that would be allocated to?

The mayor explained that the board and clerk would be working on the budget soon for the upcoming fiscal year and it will help lower the bottom line. We owe it to the taxpayers to get a lower rate.

A motion was made to adjourn the public hearing by **Trustee Carpenter**, seconded by **Trustee Williams**.

All ayes. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Janelle M Rose, Clerk-Treasurer

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