

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE HEIDELBERG TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS HELD  
SEPTEMBER 26, 2019**

**PRESENT:** David Randler, Terry Wolfe, Thomas Schoener, Brian Thumm, Solicitor Haws, Carol Keppley, Cheryl Bowers, Chief Stone, Robert Keppley, Connie Keller, Rick Hartlieb, Rev. Wm. Weiser, David Kostival (Reading Eagle), Garry and Eileen Zerbe, Wanda and Ronald Bond, Bill Oswald, Lori Brown, Brenda Wagner, Tim Wagner, Mark Wagner, Don and Karen McNutt, Kevin Snyder, John Oxenreider, Nevin Schlegel, Carla Schlegel, David Brubaker, James Heath, Phyllis Alam, Ruthie August, Michael August, Ruthie Wolfe, Kim Connors, John Connors, Kolton Ulrich, Sean McKee, Sharon Knoll, Deb Schoener, Brenda Bennick, Chris Butler, Steve Butler, Cherie Benfer, Tom Benfer, Ted Noble, Sherry Mills, Joe Purfield, Michael Davis, Michele Davis, Eric Goudy, Angie Goudy, Michele Pearson, Scott Lee, Gary Knoll, Steve Ulrich, Tom Stone plus 7 other names that are not legible.

**ABSENT:** DAVID MANBECK

Chairman Randler called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance.

At this time Supervisor Schoener read a statement regarding police merger which is attached.  
Chief Stone read a statement regarding the police merger which is attached.

Supv. Wolfe said that no officer has every asked for a raise or pay for overtime and what will happen when South Heidelberg gets called to take a child from Bethany to another site. Chairman Wolfe said he and Supv. Schoener, as the police committee, were caught off guard and had no idea this was in the works. Supv. Wolfe asked what is the hurry? Are we going to sell all our equipment, just like Robesonia and Wernersville did when they joined Western Berks and look what happened there. He said this is not a merger, this is a take-over. The SRO moved here from the Allentown area and you want to get rid of him. Also, Chief Stone will be demoted to patrolman and Eric Goudy will be out. Their proposed yearly rate might be cheaper, but we will get less hours. The residents should have a say.

Sean McKee stated they will be hiring more officers since they are currently understaffed. They will provide more coverage during the "trouble hours" and they will provide 40 hours of coverage. Someone from the audience asked if that was 40 hours of patrol time in Heidelberg Township. Sean McKee answered that their Officer's need to paper work on Heidelberg issues, just like your Chief. Chief Stone said yes, but I am here in the Township when I do the paperwork.

Pastor Bill Weiser stated he has no problem with waiting. What else should we be doing? We need more cooperation and as a community work together. He is in favor of more protection but don't rush into it, let's all work together.

Steve Butler asked why are we here, there is no urgency, no budget concerns and the people deserve an answer....why can't Heidelberg Township grow the department.

Chairman Randler said the reason why is – two officer were looking elsewhere for jobs. Officer Devore applied at Womelsdorf and Chief Stone applied at South Heidelberg and the police committee knew nothing about it. Chairman Randler stated he met with Chief Grimm, Sear McKee and DA Adams and asked Dave Manbeck to attend also. He also asked Terry Wolfe, but Terry didn't go. There was no sneaking. Supv. Schoener said Township business should be done here. Supv. Wolfe asked why a vote was needed at the last meeting and Chairman Randler replied "it's the right thing to do". South Heidelberg has presented a proposal for 40 hours of police coverage for Heidelberg for \$140,000.00 a

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year with 3% cost increase in the second and third years of the agreement. Supv. Randler the Township budgets \$156,000 a year for police but that number does not include insurance for the police and Social Security and Medicare costs. Again Chairman Randler said "It's the right thing to do". He also stated that with the proposal with South Heidelberg, Heidelberg Township will have no additional expenses for radio fees, pension costs, pay increases, car repairs, health and business insurance or training costs, no taxes, no more dealing with the school and you can't get out of Robesonia without going through Heidelberg Township. Supv. Wolfe said look how the costs went up from Western Berks.

Steve Butler asked if there were any other proposals. Sean McKee said Lower Heidelberg declined. Sean said this would be a 3 year agreement.

Supv. Schoener stated South Heidelberg Police are still in negotiations.

Chief Stone asked why we are here tonight. There is no emergency and no complaints about the police department.

Supv. Schoener relayed that Chief Stone helped the children on a school bus during a snow storm. "will we get that kind of community involvement from South Heidelberg??"

Mrs. Bond said forget the rumors – get together and share the facts.

A Conrad Weiser student said they all love Officer Davore.

Supv. Schoener stated that Chief Stone has done a great job and you are willing to throw it all away.

Members of the audience grew angry as it became evident that Chairman Randler was going to call for a vote. They asked the Supervisors to wait a year to see how it will work with Wernersville and Robesonia.

Steve Butler asked for Chairman Randler to resign. The audience applauded.

There were many other comments from the audience – all stating their displeasure with the proposal from South Heidelberg.

Chief Stone said the current police department is doing an outstanding job and there is no emergency and no complaints about misconduct. Since when are the Supervisors interested in outsourcing services?

At this time Chairman Randler called Supv. Manbeck on the phone for the vote.

Supv. Schoener made a motion to delay the vote and keep the SRO and Police Department as is for 1 year – till end of 2020. The motion was seconded by Supv. Wolfe. A roll call vote was taken.

Supv. Schoener – yes, Supv. Wolfe – yes ----Chairman Randler –no, Supv. Thumm – no and by telephone, Supv. Manbeck – no. Motion did not pass.

Chairman Randler made a motion to accept the 3 year proposal for police coverage from South Heidelberg Township. A roll call vote was taken. Chairman Randler – yes, Supv. Thumm – yes, Supv. Manbeck – yes (by telephone). Supv. Wolfe – no, and Supv. Schoener – no. The motion passed.

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Supv. Schoener stated that it is a disgrace and you all got to see what is going on here. He also stated that it won't stop till this cancer is removed – so remember to vote.

Supv. Schoener and Supv. Wolfe left the meeting. Since Supv. Manbeck was not in attendance there was not a quorum to continue the meeting.

Cheryl L. Bowers, Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cheryl L. Bowers", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

## THANK EVERYONE FOR COMING

I would also like to thank SH representatives for coming tonight and for giving the local boroughs and municipalities an option for police coverage. As you know there were numerous unanswered questions at the last meeting due to the police committee and the police chief finding out hours before the presentation was happening. For such an important decision for the township only 1 hour of presentation and debate occurred before Chairman Randler made a motion for a vote. I would like to thank my fellow supervisors for not entertaining Mr. Randler's motion for a vote.

This is why we are here tonight for the residents of HBT and the CW community to hear the good and the bad for keeping HBT Police and SRO intact or disbanding. One would have to ask themselves why all the secrecy for a decision this important for HBT and the CW community.  
~~what was the~~  
~~Rush for a vote~~

~~At the~~ When I find something good...

Decisions for HT come easy when the majority agrees instead of 1 person rules.

A democracy works when people are informed, have all of the facts, and have unemotional discussions and decisions for the greater good.

In closing, I would hope that we as Township supervisors can put personal conflicts aside, and vote in good conscience for what is best for Heidelberg Township.

## Chief's Response to Proposal

Heidelberg Twp Board of Supervisors' Meeting

Presented September 26, 2019

### INTRODUCTION

"I need to respond to the latest turn of events here in the Township. I do so out of duty and with all due respect to both the Heidelberg Township Board and the representatives from South Heidelberg Township.

First, I would like to thank all of those that have come out tonight to support the Heidelberg Township Police Department and to be part of the decision-making process as it pertains to your community and your school district. I am extremely grateful for the support that you give to us every day here in Heidelberg and it is truly our honor to serve you.

Next, to the Board, I want to make clear the fact that there is presently No Emergency in the Township which requires you to move on the disbanding of our Police Department. There are no exigent circumstances that make the consideration of South Heidelberg Township's Proposal an absolute necessity right now. There are presently no budget constraints on the Township that require us to outsource our Police Department. In the last eight months, our Police Department has operated at an average cost of \$12,000 a month. Keep in mind that, included in that figure is both a replacement transmission and a replacement axle for police vehicles that cost an unforeseen \$6,000, since January 2019. All things remaining the same, our present police situation will cost \$144,000 per year, with sixty-four hours of scheduled patrol per week and thirty-seven and a half hours of SRO duties per week provided

by Officer Devore, who is here tonight, during the school year. On average, we are providing more than 100 man-hours of dedicated service to Heidelberg Township and Conrad Weiser High School and Middle School. You will hear more about these figures and more from our Police Committee, Mr. Wolfe and Mr. Schoener, tonight.

I think that the majority of us here tonight and around the Conrad Weiser Community would argue that the job that our Department is doing, with all of the different facets of our jurisdiction, is outstanding and a vast improvement over how things were done in the past here in Heidelberg.

Currently, there are no formal complaints pending for our department. In fact, in the last three years, there have been no formal complaints filed at all. In addition, as a Chief, I have received nothing but praise from this Board concerning our department, much like what you heard from the Chairman and Mr. McKee last month. So why are we all here tonight if there is no emergency, negligence or misconduct within Heidelberg Township Police Department?

## **BACKGROUND**

I live in South Heidelberg Township. We have delegates here from South Heidelberg who have diligently worked to come up with the proposal for police services that was presented to the Board last month. I would like to commend them on their enthusiasm and support for the Conrad Weiser School District and for how their Officers provide police service to me and my neighbors in South Heidelberg. We truly have an outstanding team of cops in South Heidelberg. I would like to apologize to the delegation from South Heidelberg that they have been alerted to a second false emergency in Heidelberg in only nine months.

In December, they were alerted that Heidelberg Township would not be providing SRO coverage to the High School and Middle School and that they were needed to swoop in and save the day with their own SRO. Then five days later, four of the five members of this Board voted to go ahead with the SRO Program, out of nowhere and for some unknown reason. I am aware of how much this must have aggravated you to rush to get that together, only to have the rug pulled out from under you. Gentlemen, last month, the Chairman of this Board reportedly ran to them with news that "The SRO is leaving!", in hopes that they would rush in and save the day, thereby eradicating our current SRO Program that the Township pays nothing for and for which he has nothing but disdain. However, just like in December of last year, his actions were premature. Officer Devore had been offered a full-time position with Womelsdorf in August, after working there for the Summer and he fully intended to accept their offer. However, 27 hours after their offer was made, he decided not to take the job. Officer Devore never "quit" or submitted his memo to leave HTPD. I am not happy with the amount of unnecessary preparation that South Heidelberg has had to put together on short notice, twice now, or that my tax dollars were used to pay for it. So why are we all here tonight if our SRO never quit?

I stayed home from the August meeting here. I had been made aware that delegates from South Heidelberg Township were to be here to present their proposal and I did not want to interfere with what they had to say and how you, the Board, received and considered it. However, in my absence, I have been told that First, Officer Devore's name was dragged through the mud by a delegate from South Heidelberg, regarding students reportedly being made to "feel like criminals". Secondly, that their coverage would ease concerns of residents regarding PSP response times when HTPD would be off-duty and Third, that they have desperate concerns for my safety and well- being "all alone" out here. First off, let me address the accusation that Officer Devore's presence or interaction with CW students is intended to or has the effect of making them feel like criminals. This is a patently false accusation. But don't listen to me, ask

the representatives from the school that are here tonight how they feel about that accusation and what feedback they are getting from the staff and students that Officer Devore has daily contact with. As to the feigned concern for my safety and the reports that someone saw me handcuff someone all by my lonesome on the side of the road, I have quite a bit to say. First, I have constant and dependable assistance of the Womelsdorf Borough Police who are seconds away and almost 24 hours a day. Just ask Chief Pontician. Next, I have the same assistance always available from Western Berks Police Department, Lower Heidelberg Police and even South Heidelberg Township Police Department, who I'm also told, will be seconds away in Robesonia and Wernersville, come January. I can honestly say that I have never had the level of available backup anywhere else in my policing career like I have here. Secondly, sometimes we as police officers are called to handcuff people. It's part of the job and as a former patrol operations instructor, I am very good at it so, South Heidelberg, there is no need to worry. As I taught a lot of your' officers when they were cadets at the Reading Police Academy, early cuffing can prevent the kind of incidents that I frequently see out here in Western Berks, when suspects run and end up in corn fields, when they should have been immediately handcuffed or even shackled to prevent this. Finally, on to the PSP response-time concern. I can report that it is their policy to alert the surrounding jurisdictions when a serious call (such as the burglary/home invasion example cited at the last meeting) has been dispatched to their Troopers, in areas such as ours, when they are not close, so that they can assist and possibly arrive before them. It has been my experience that, when PSP Reading is responding to a serious call in North Heidelberg (PSP coverage area), we are dispatched and arrive before them. In fact, it happened last week.

#### **PROPOSAL QUESTIONS**

Following last month's meeting, I was forwarded a copy of South Heidelberg's Proposal for Police Services and I have several questions that you, the Board, should all be very interested to know the answers to, prior to voting on this issue. Don't get me wrong, I have seen the regionalization of policing work very well in certain areas and I think that it could work here in Heidelberg Township, if it is done right and



under the right conditions. To rush into a pilot program that is inadequate compared to your' current coverage and vague regarding their physical presence would be foolish. Wouldn't it be wise to watch how this works for Robesonia and Wernersville for a year? Why weren't I or the police committee included in this discussion from the onset? To South Heidelberg you the Board must ask, are the forty hours of coverage that you are proposing to be physically served in Heidelberg Township, performing speed enforcement, business checks and the like or will they be spent anywhere in your vast future coverage area, starting January 2020? Will the SRO be assigned to the High School/Middle School Campus or will the Officer be tasked with covering the entire portion of the school district under your control in January? How much money are you allocating for your' "OTBank" to be used for court overtime and unforeseen emergencies (ie. BCH Runaways)? In any free market system, the vendor providing the most for the money should be the one to get the job. Residents of Heidelberg Township and you, their Board, need to demand that their money be put to the most effective use. Residents of South Heidelberg, like me, will demand that we not end up paying double to replace an SRO Program that is already fully funded and effective and that we not be stuck with the overage for Heidelberg coverage that just doesn't work. Mr. Chairman, since when are you such a strong proponent of outsourcing for any services to other Townships and don't you think that moves like these take away from the autonomy and final word that our Police Committee has in how the Police Department functions? At present, the Police Committee can contact me at any time, day or night and whatever they pass on to me will be taken care of immediately.

## **CONCLUSION**

Some key clichés that I am hearing being thrown around are "Boots on the Ground" and "Mom and Pop Operation". I think that we are all intelligent enough to figure out that our sixty-four hours of patrol coverage is more than their proposed forty hours of patrol coverage, which obviously constitutes more boots on the ground for the same amount of money. I like South Heidelberg Township Police and all but what makes their boots on the ground better than our boots on the ground? As for the "Mom and Pop"

Operation comments, I think we should let the Community decide if my guys and I are a bunch of hayseeds or not. If you are comparing my policing to that of a South Heidelberg Patrolman or Supervisor, I consider that a complement to our team and I don't think you will find that any of us, here or there, are anything but highly trained professionals.

Please keep in mind that, moves like these affect people's livelihoods, people's taxes, people's safety and the morale of an entire organization.

Regardless, I will remain and keep doing my best for Heidelberg Township. *To the Board, I ask that you please vote for the alternative that best serves Heidelberg Township.*

Thank you for your' time."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Stone". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "S".

HTPD

Chief of Police