

MINUTES
New Holland Borough Council
Special Meeting
June 23, 2025

New Holland Borough Council met in Special Session on Monday, June 23, 2025 at 6 pm. in the auditorium of Garden Spot High School. Members present were: President Patrick K. Morgan, Vice-President Michael H. Kurtz, D. Michael Ireland, John M. Taylor and Charles F. Kidhardt. Members Bryant J. Glick and Harry M. Klinger were absent. Also present were Manager/Secretary J. Richard Fulcher, Acting Police Chief Mark Bentzel, Mayor M. Timothy Bender and Borough Administrative Assistant Paula S. Walsh

Others in attendance were West Earl Township Police Chief Eric Higgins, West Earl Township Manager Jenna Reigle and Sergeant Burns of the West Earl Township Police Department. New Holland Residents in attendance included: Tony Bender, Rebekah Brown, Mike Burkhart, Penny Burkhart, Todd Burkhart, Amy Hackman, Jarrod Deel, Regina Deel, Mitch Dissinger, Jeff Eavenson, Lisa Eavenson, Alvin Esh, Connie Esh, Lisa Gehr, Nate Good, Steve Good, Christine Graybill, Brendon Harnish, Carmen Harnish, Kim Harnish, Ray Harnish, Terry Harnish, Cindy Hecker, Jim Hecker, Ralph Hess, Trisha Hess, Barry Hoffert, Steve Loewen, Neal Martin, Gale McLean, Hayden McLean, Jayden Powers, John Rhoades, Jill Rodriguez, Susanna Roland, Karen Sheesly, Eric Sifford, Charles Stern, Dennis Summers, Doris Summers, Colton White and Courtney Willwerth.

Non-Borough residents included: Diane Boone, Jordan Byrnes, Francine Duncan, John Duncan, John Ford, Terry Higgins, Daniel Huyard, Derek Kanuck, Keith Kauffman, Butch Keppley, Robert Lee III, Joanne Marshall, Joshua Mertz, Jarod Nolt, Lisa Plank, Tom Plank, Bob Spotts, Barb Taylor and Dave T. (Ephrata).

President Morgan opened the meeting, noting that the purposes of tonight's meeting are to first receive an overview presentation of potential future police services with West Earl Township to be followed by questions or comments from Borough residents about the service or operations; or on the financial analysis for the Borough taxpayer in relation to future policing alternatives. This is to be followed by potential action by Council to authorize the Consultant, Manager and Solicitor to work to prepare a possible police services contract with West Earl Township. He first has two brief statements to read from the two Council members who cannot attend tonight's meeting. He then read the members' statements, beginning with member Bryant Glick.

Good evening, friends and neighbors, thank you all for coming. As your elected Councilman for the past six years, I felt it necessary to provide you all with a reason why I am not able to attend tonight's special meeting. For the past two months I have had a special family celebration commitment in South Carolina. I am on an airplane traveling as this is read.

Through serving as a member of the police committee, executive meetings, and being able to ask Chief Higgins specific questions on the proposal from West Earl relative to the concerns I have heard from you all as community members, I feel I have an understanding on the vision of West Earl and their proposal. However, along with Councilman Klinger, I have asked for notes from tonight's meeting as well so I may include them and discern what is best for our great community and citizens of New Holland Borough.

It has been an honor to represent you, I do not take this decision lightly or half-heartedly, I encourage all residents, business owners and stakeholders to reach out to me. God Bless.

He then read Council member Harry Klinger's note:

Good evening and thank you all for attending. I felt it necessary to provide the reason why I am not able to attend tonight's informational meeting. I have had on my schedule for some time a four day commitment in New York that others are relying on my attendance, therefore, making it impossible to reschedule.

I have been involved with all prior meetings of the Council including a thorough reading of the proposal from West Earl and an executive session where Council could ask questions of the Chief. I have asked for notes from tonight's meeting so I may include them in my analysis of what is best for the citizens of New Holland.

I do not take this decision lightly and appreciate all the input from residents of the Borough. Thank you.

President Morgan stated he would like to welcome everyone this evening. At the beginning of this year Council was faced with a number of significant responsibilities as to the future of police services in our community. Our long standing police services contract with Earl Township is scheduled to expire at the end of the year. Unexpectedly, we are also tasked with hiring a new police chief following the unplanned vacancy, understanding that these matters are directly influenced by the actual cost of the delivery of police services. Council took steps to gather accurate data and conduct responsible due diligence. We requested alternative police proposals, including from West Earl Township, and hired an independent consultant to perform a comprehensive analysis of staffing needs and services costs, both with the Borough operating by itself and in partnership with Earl Township. This process has significantly educated Council as to the true cost associated with maintaining quality police protection. One key result of this analysis was that continuing our current shared service model would require an approximate 8% increase in contributions from Earl Township in order to sustain operations at acceptable levels. Borough Council is making preparations for a non-binding action tonight. This action is designed to protect two key priorities; one,

ensuring that the Borough is positioned to continue providing effective and uninterrupted police services to our residents; and two, preserve employment and the pension earnings of our dedicated police personnel. To be clear, the action we are taking tonight is not final in partnering with West Earl, but rather to direct our consultant, Borough Manager and Solicitor to prepare a full police service contract for Council's review. That contract will be based on the final proposal from West Earl Township. This is the same proposal that has been distributed to you for your review this evening. This action is entirely procedural and non-binding. It simply ensures we are ready to respond to any decision or lack of decision made by Earl Township at their July 7 meeting, relative to the employment transition to West Earl Township. You will see this in the paperwork that you received tonight. Hopefully you pick one up. Should any New Holland police officers choose to seek employment with West Earl Township, the following provisions would apply. He will summarize job status and placement, pension plan years transfer, earned time, payout, promotional considerations at West Earl.

If Council approves the motion this evening, our Consultant, Borough Manager and Solicitor will finalize the service agreement based on West Earl's Proposal. That agreement will be formally presented and discussed at a continued Council meeting in early July. Please note the upcoming regularly scheduled July 1, 2025 Council meeting will not include any action on the proposed service agreement; however, it will include a related action item, namely a motion to adopt an ordinance amending the police pension plan to allow officers to purchase prior police service credit under Act 49 of 2024. In conclusion, Council has worked thoughtfully and strategically to prepare for all possible outcomes. Our focus remains on maintaining a strong, reliable public safety service for our residents, and offering our police officers the best possible future, regardless of which direction the final decision takes.

West Earl Police Chief Higgins then presented a power point display of the main components of the Police Services Proposal from West Earl Township and what it means for Borough residents and officers.

Following the presentation, the meeting was opened to questions or comments. Eight Borough residents spoke. President Morgan noted a few public comment guidelines. A microphone will be brought to you if you desire to speak. Each speaker will be given two minutes to speak. Please have your statement prepared before asking to speak. All speakers must be Borough residents. When recognized, speakers should state their name and address. Respectful and civil discourse is expected. The following will not be allowed: finger pointing, name

calling, accusations or foul language. If any of these occur, the speaker will be asked to sit. If the disrespect continues, the speaker will be asked to leave. Remember, we are all adults. Neighbors and community members treat each other with respect. As Council President, he reserves the right to recess the meeting until order is restored. He also noted that at least one member of the audience, non-resident Daniel Huyard is live streaming the meeting this evening. Mr. Huyard properly informed him prior to the meeting that he would be doing this; so everyone is aware.

A summary of the discussion with the eight Borough residents who then asked questions or provided their comments follows.

Resident Jim Hecker of 233 Aspen Street. He is curious what the end game is, to merge everything together to save money or stretching resources.

President Morgan responded to this question. When Borough Council, as you will see in the packets, started this process, we had a couple of contracts that were due for renewal. Contrary to what some people have heard, it is also about money, but primarily it is about making sure that the residents of New Holland are protected and have the same service that we have and expect now. So through this process, Borough Council was educated on the true cost of policing and realized that in order for us to continue policing, Earl Township would need to increase their contribution to New Holland Borough about 8 percent. Currently they are paying 48 percent. Their population is currently 60 percent compared to New Holland's population. So in fairness to our taxpayers here in New Holland, we felt that they would need to adjust their contribution. The end game is not a game. You know, the end game is, or our focus is to offer the best policing that we can at the best price. It is not all about prices. It is not all about policing. It is about getting the service for the dollar. And as you can see in your information packets, there would be a significant increase to the taxpayers if we did stay with New Holland Borough only. That is not something that we want to tell our taxpayers, that we are going to increase your taxes to keep the services less than what we have now. He will tell you, from what he understands, in order to partner with West Earl Township, it would actually be a decrease of taxes of approximately \$400 on the conservative side. It could possibly be more. In order to keep the Borough police department, it would actually increase the taxes just for the police department, approximately \$400. He is not going to represent more, but he thinks you can expect a \$400 increase per \$225,000 assessed household if we keep the New Holland Police Department intact as a standalone unit. If we do partner with West Earl, we can

perceive a \$400 or more decrease in taxes, which is approximately an \$800 spread on a \$225,000 appraised property.

Acting Chief Bentzel commented as to the idea of current patrol officer staffing, noting the Borough with Earl Township has two officers on each shift. The proposed patrol sectors for the Borough and Earl Township from West Earl will use the same patrol sectors, using Main Street for the north/south line. However, they will have two other officers patrolling the sectors to the west and at least one supervisor patrolling the entire area available.

Ray Harnish of 502 West Cedar Street spoke next. He asked if he heard right that New Holland currently has 26 officers; and also do the current New Holland officers go to work for West Earl Township. He is also curious how the Borough ended up at this point. Someone also said this was not about money.

Chief Higgins answered that West Earl currently has 12 officers and if Earl Township and the Borough both come for service, he must add another 14 positions. Yes, every New Holland officer will be given the opportunity to work for West Earl Township.

President Morgan noted as he said in his earlier statement, that in the beginning of the year we had two or three renewals that we had to do this year. One of them obviously was the Earl Township contract. The second was unexpectedly, we had to hire a chief so Council, knowing its strengths and weaknesses, understood that the one thing we did not have knowledge of was the cost of policing. And so we hired consultant Mark Bentzel to come in and tell us, this is where your department is at. This is how he sees things falling. As a consultant, we really need to take his word for things, and he will tell you that he has full confidence in Chief Bentzel. Because of that, we did find that Earl Township, based on population, would actually make approximately a 60 percent contribution. They are currently at 48 percent and so that essentially means that New Holland Borough taxpayers are subsidizing Earl Township 12 percent of the cost of policing. Now, being a New Holland Borough resident, he is like, he does not want to pay for the police for Earl Township. They should be paying their fair share. But that being said, when we ran the numbers of the typical formula that we have always run through which is the per capita numbers. It was recommended that we increase in year one to 56 percent. Borough Council said, no we cannot increase 8 percent in one year. So we agreed to go 4 percent in the first year and to 52 percent and another 2 percent in year two to 54 percent and another 2 percent in year three to 56 percent still leaving a 4 percent gap for years four and five. He will say this, Earl Township is

set to grow approximately 1,000 to 2,000 people in population in five years. In fairness to our taxpayers, how much do we require from Earl Township? In the process, we reached out to different municipalities for an offer of police services. West Earl was gracious enough to put together a very, very nice package for us. They heard the concerns of Borough Council. They answered our concerns and they responded in kind and presented what he feels, speaking for himself, a very good final proposal. So that is how we have gotten here tonight. He will say this to you and the others here, in no time did any Borough Council member express any interest in eliminating the New Holland police department. In fact, as some of you know, but probably will not publicly admit, we have been trying hard to get Earl Township to stay engaged with us. So let us assure you, no Borough Council member went into this with the design of getting rid of the New Holland police department. Our focus is on what is best for the taxpayer, for our constituents.

Resident Todd Burkhart, 141 West Willow Ridge, asked what can people expect when a 911 emergency call is received, is there going to be an officer nearby to respond or is there going to be some type of, for example a 45 minutes waiting period.

West Earl Chief Higgins answered, stating there will be officers in and around New Holland. They are not going to be allowed to leave this sector without supervisor approval. He is going to stagger shift start times so that prevents this area, the Township or the Borough, from being unprotected. That is the most important thing. He thinks we are all thinking the same. We want to make sure we are covered. Our families are covered, our businesses are covered. He wants to expand a little bit on this. One thing he prides himself on is integrity. And so when we put together our Agreement with Earl Township, we have very similar things set up in that contract. And he proposed to them, just like he proposes to New Holland, there is going to be an officer here to respond, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. His officers will tell you, we have never, as an organization, ever fallen below our set minimum staffing levels to allow that. We are a small department. He has actually jumped in and filled in shifts in order to prevent that himself. He does not see that happening with this as the organization starts to grow. Your coverage is going to get better. You are going to have somebody here all the time. That is clear in the Proposal.

Mr. Burkhart next stated he has owned a business in the Borough for 29 years. He thinks it may be like 28 years since a business was broken into overnight. There was one incident 27 or 28 years ago but that was taken care of. Part of that is because of a night patrol officer Zimmerman, who has since retired but had done a

fantastic job. As a business owner, we want to be reassured our businesses are protected at night when we are not there.

Chief Higgins responded absolutely, they already have guidelines set up in place. Officers are required to conduct business checks on local businesses even during the daytime. It is one of the things they want to implement. If they make something happen with New Holland Borough, this may involve a daily foot patrol in your district or business area. This includes reaching out, meeting with the business owners, talking to you on a daily basis. They are in the process, actually, when they first started this, doing that internally, where officers are going to be required to make what we call positive contact, or they are going to have to, on a daily basis, go out and make contact with a business owner or somebody, they are going to come back and report about it. It could be just a quick little “hey” but there is no better way to maintain or build a relationship, but to meet your business owner and say anything going on. You see something being suspicious or something you would like to report. So that will continue. Then it comes down to supervision. Like he said, before they are going to have something that neither Earl or New Holland currently has. They are going to have a supervisor on duty 24 hours a day. His supervisors are going to be trained. They are going to know that they are to make sure these officers are out there doing that every night. So that will happen.

Regina Deel of 385 Valley View Drive spoke next. The questions she had related to the Chief talking about allocating expenses on an annual basis, and there will be a surplus at the end if you were under budget, if you are over budget, what happens? And then the second question, along with that is how is that amount determined? And then projecting forward a couple of years, what do you see as a year over year increase in the contract rate?

Chief Higgins responded that each municipality with West Earl Township is assigned their proportional share of the budget. If New Holland and Earl Township both go with West Earl, the Borough’s proportional share is 27 percent. This is based on the cost of the number of officers needed for proper coverage.

Mrs. Deel inquired if the overhead expenses are calculated per officer, so things like health insurance, cost of wages, or is it specific to the officers assigned; and going forward five years, where is the cost projected to go.

Chief Higgins noted it is an average. The five year cost numbers he showed from the Proposal are worst case numbers. Each one of those years at the most is a 5

percent increase. However, historically, this year, his budget from 2024 to the 2025, only went up 2.2 percent and of course the only reason why it went up that much is because West Earl has some projects coming up, so we have stabilized. One can never predict the future, but worst case scenario, our prediction is 5 percent but he anticipates it to be about two and half percent at the most.

Mrs. Deel said she is assuming the savings is just about half, a little bit less than half to go with West Earl. So what is that based off of just reduction in overhead, reduction in liability insurance, health insurance premiums? Because she is assuming, if you would hire the New Holland police officers, wages would stay the same. So she is trying to understand just some of where that savings is coming from.

President Morgan replied that these questions can be referred to Consultant/Acting Chief Bentzel relative to the projected costs of a New Holland only department. The minimum savings for the first year alone is over \$1.24 million. West Earl's cost per officer is lower, which with the overhead savings includes differences in other costs and benefits.

Chief Bentzel stated you have to look at West Earl's cost per officer. You break down the Borough's budget this year alone, we are just under \$200,000 per officer. So when you look at an officer, you just cannot look at their salary. A lot of people get caught up in that his salary is only \$110,000 or whatever, but they do not understand there are more costs than that. There is insurance, there is life and medical insurance, there is fuel in the cars, there is liability insurance; there is all these other costs and benefits. So he does not recall, and does not want to speak out of turn, but he does know currently and in this contract, their cost per officer is substantially less than what you are currently paying.

President Morgan stated there is a word called regionalization he would prefer not to refer to it as that. He prefers to call it partnering, but the goal of regionalization is to consolidate expenses and overhead. And the reality is, this is a regionalization coverage. Part of the concept of regionalization is to consolidate those expenses. So instead of having six cruisers here in New Holland, and six cruisers in Earl Township, and six cruisers in West Earl Township, you only need 12 cruisers. So right there is a cost savings as well as the fuel required. Like with any larger business, there are better insurance rates the larger body that you have. So a lot of it is consolidation, and call it what it is. As he said, he does not like the word regionalization, because everybody gets all panicked about that, but the New Holland Ambulance Association does it, Garden Spot Fire Rescue does it. So this

is just a step in that process. He just prefers to say partnering so let us stick to partnering.

John Rhoades, 56 North Whisper Lane, stated he was glad to see this information given out at the meeting. He understands that, just looking at the internet, that there was a certain amount of secrecy in this whole thing. He would like to see 35 miles an hour speed limit down through town, because everybody knows what is going on, what is expected. This is kind of a general question, why were the Borough residents kept uninformed with what was going on in this process?

President Morgan responded that there was no secrecy. We have an open Council meeting the first Tuesday of every month. Our Agenda is posted every month on the website, and there is absolutely no secrecy. In fact, tonight's meeting is not really required to get approval to have a contract prepared. This was done in the interest of full transparency, he promised from day one that when we get to this point, we will have a very public, very well advertised meeting at a large venue. So the fact is that it is not secret; it has been very, non-secret.

Mr. Rhoades stated he spoke with six or seven police officers from New Holland a week ago. None of them seemed to know what was going on. Maybe they just did not want to tell him. But he was curious. Now, one question that he has is the cost of New Holland maintaining its own police force. That is not the cost that New Holland has spent in the past. That is a future projected cost of \$2,680,000 if the Borough goes on its own.

Chief Bentzel stated these are good questions but he wants to go backwards a little bit. He started here in February as the Acting Chief of Police. And one of the things that he is going to talk about tonight is Council asked him to provide a snapshot proposal, financial, staffing and so forth on if New Holland Borough maintained their own police department. When we talk about finances, the first thing you have to understand is this. Now, these are not exact numbers but up until this point, imagine that New Holland Borough and Earl Township basically share 50 percent of the cost of the police department across the board. Fifty percent of that potentially is leaving. Now when that 50 percent leaves, we have a huge vacuum that has to be filled. Someone needs to pay that 50 percent so there are a couple of options. Option one is to reduce the manpower and the staffing to the point where we are paying roughly the same amount of money as what New Holland pays currently for their police department. And let us back up a second. One other thing he wants to get out currently, New Holland Borough has 10 uniform police officers. They have a chief of police. They will always have a

chief of police. They have a lieutenant/detective. They have a detective and they have an SRO. So that is 14. Prior to that, they had staffing of one additional officer. So here are some of the challenges that he has found. The SRO has retired, so we still have 10 uniformed police officers that are what you folks would traditionally know as the 911 coverage. When somebody calls 911, they are responding to your house. The challenges we have right now with those 10 police officers, we are still finding ourselves with open shifts, because shifts where an officer is assigned but they are on vacation, or they are sick, or they have some type of time where they can be off. So thus far this year, that has occurred 54 times. We have to backfill that with overtime. He only assumes that by the end of the year, we will probably experience over 100 shortages or open shifts. So as he begins to look at this and determine what type of manpower just New Holland Borough needs, the first thing he did was evaluate the number of calls, call load and 911 calls that come into New Holland Borough. It is roughly 3,000 calls a year. There is a formula that is used, which a lot of other people use to convert the number of calls that come in to determine how many uniform police officers you actually need to be able to respond to those calls. The formula tells him that we need four uniform police officers to respond to that call load. That does not count the chief and it does not count the lieutenant/detective, or perhaps a detective or a school resource officer; but only four uniformed police officers. So the first proposal that he gave to Borough Council was for a seven officer police department. That would mean that one police officer would be on duty, on a shift by themselves, where we currently do everything in our power to have two on duty. So it would be one police officer on duty by themselves, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, provided they do not get sick or take vacation, because then we are going to have a shift shortage again, so the remaining people in the department, the chief or the lieutenant/detective, they are not going to be able to focus their time like they should on their other duties. They are going to have to be dressed in uniform and ready to go, because if we drop our resources to that number after the first 911 call comes in to New Holland Borough, and a second one comes in, you do not have a police officer to respond, so now you are going to sit and wait, assuming it is an emergency. You may have to wait awhile, so people are going to have to leave the job that they are doing again as the plain clothed lieutenant/detective or the chief of police, whatever their role is, they are going to have to leave the station and go and respond either as the backup or the second secondary call. So it was pretty easy to determine that it was not feasible. It does not make good sense, and we are not going to be accomplishing for the citizens what we really want to and that is to provide a public service with the police officers, if we reduce our staffing to that number. So the second proposal that was put together was 10 police officers,

which would give us 7 uniformed police officers, a Chief of police, a lieutenant/detective and a school resource officer.

The problem with that is, first of all, we really still do not have enough manpower to fill all the open shifts as they arise, because they will occur when people want to be off for vacation or they are sick or something along those lines. The second issue is our budget, which in 2025 we were paying roughly a little over \$1.6 million for our police department as it exists. That would be our half with Earl Township. When we remove Earl Township and we fund 10 police officers, we are looking at increasing our cost for police service very close to a million dollars; would be pushing over \$2.6 million. The only way to accomplish that is to either drop our service level down to a point where you are not going to get the service that you are accustomed to or that you want, or we increase the cost policing by over \$1million. We could argue back and forth, but the reduction in financing when you remove your 50/50 partner, in Earl Township, there are a lot of costs that were being shared, like heating and air conditioning the building, garage space and many other things that you will have to absorb that entire cost as just New Holland Borough. The current cost to the Borough of about \$1.6 million, that cost would go to about \$2.6 million. When the Borough is on its own, the cost goes up.

Mr. Rhoades then asked how the Proposal was from West Earl Township rather than the Borough policing moving to cover somebody else.

Chief Bentzel stated he is not sure what he is saying there, but if he follows correctly, he is asking why is New Holland Borough taking a proposal from West Earl Township, instead of West Earl Township taking a proposal from New Holland Borough. Is that your question? He then asked Chief Higgins if West Earl Township would care to fall under New Holland Borough police management?

Chief Higgins said they would not.

Chief Bentzel continued. So how did we end up merging with West Earl? So New Holland Borough Council looked at the cost of policing, and said, okay, let us take a look at what it would cost to partner with another Township. So the Borough approached three different municipalities. West Earl is the only municipality that showed a realistic interest in partnering. And when I say partnering, understanding that my past work was for a regional area police force. Today is when we need to make the decisions. West Earl has worked with us very patiently with the proposal.

Mr. Rhoades inquired if the contract had a severance for cause, statement.

Chief Higgins stated as presented it is written as an initial five year Agreement. At this time, the Borough is free to either start its own police force or go out and choose another police organization to provide that service. He likes this model a little bit, and thinks it has worked very well and he has taken that to heart. Where his officers know, hey look, we contracted with another municipality. We know they know if we do not deliver, guess what? They decide not to continue. We are going to have to cut staff. So this affects everyone. So he is not looking at this as a failure. He is not even considering this to be a failure. He has had a great opportunity to work with Chief Bentzel. As he sat down and prepared this, he realized the level of service is something that none of us can do separately. So this is put together in final form. When we did the numbers, the great thing about it was, it actually schooled us somewhat. It brings down everybody's cost. So you are getting a level of service from one organization for all of us, and it brings down everybody's cost. That is why the area of regionalized coverage, and Chief Bentzel, who is very knowledgeable in regionalization, is aware it brings down everybody's cost with the service level going up. It lifts professionalism and so on.

Mr. Rhoades stated he sees that and is convinced; noting maybe we should continue this by combining the Borough and Township managements. Maybe we can save an equal amount of cost.

Courtney Willwerth of 230 South Brookefield Lane stated she wanted to clarify something said earlier by Chief Bentzel. He said typically there are only two officers during the day or night. You try to achieve two officers. They work 12 hour shifts. Sometimes there were able to be three officers on duty, so you try to have three during the day but a minimum of two during the day and night, is that correct?

Chief Bentzel stated in most cases he is able to only have two. Each of the two 12 hour shifts is to have two officers. When someone is sick or on vacation or something, he tries to fill that void with overtime. Now that in and of itself, is not problematic if it occurs every so often where it is not frequent. But like he said before, he went back and looked at the scheduling, since the first of the year. We have 54 occasions where that has occurred already. And we had more staff before he came. He thinks it was two, might have been two platoons or two shifts that had three on each one. And there is a point where we have had on a few occasions where we have sent police officers out on their own, by themselves, nobody else working because we could not get somebody to come in and fill the overtime. So

that is not really a good look at this stage of the game. He knows you kind of shake your head and say, wow, he cannot believe no one would want overtime. But there are times when these guys are working 12 hour shifts, and then it is their day off, and you are expecting that they have to work one or two more. He has never worked a whole lot of seven shifts in his life, but that is a tough task. It is going to wear you down. So that takes us to the staffing concerns. If we reduce this to the point where Borough Council might look at it and say, well, maybe we could make that work, we will have a mess. We will not even be able to field a team. They are going to be out there by themselves. And as soon as someone is tied up on a midnight shift and they arrest somebody for drunk driving, and maybe they are tied up for two hours, you have no one else. That is where we are going to start looking at how long it is going to take for somebody to get there. Because if it is not going to be New Holland it is going to be somebody else from a neighboring police department. So we are kind of in the same boat, but going with West Earl, having two during the day and two at night while still having others to cover the extra shift if someone calls off, or someone has vacation with overtime, or something like that.

President Morgan noted that with West Earl Township there is one officer per sector and at least one supervisor on duty overnight also, so there are actually five officer available for backup overnight.

Mrs. Willwerth then inquired about the SRO portion. She asked if it is mentioned if it is in the Proposal.

Chief Higgins stated that is something that will be decided with the School District. The contract period with the Borough is until December 31 and after that it will be discussed with the District by West Earl. If it can be worked out that would be great. They would have the SRO so his staffing would account for that. He is very committed to schools and has an extensive background. Where he was previously Chief they had a school resource officer. In relation to the inquiry about current New Holland officers, let him again be clear here, because he has nothing but respect for them. He has not met all of them and is hoping that if this does go through then they decide to join us. He absolutely believes that if you sit down and you look and see the level of service and how regionalization or contract reduces everybody's cost, your service is going to go up, so if you look at the budget proposal, it stabilizes everyone's budget. Working with Chief Bentzel and his Manager on the costs was very beneficial as to the future service and cost.

Neal Martin of 17 South Whisper Lane stated he had read in the Proposal for services from West Earl Township it mentioned Crisis Intervention and Crash Reconstruction training. Also what is the Accreditation mentioned with the Borough and West Earl Township?

President Morgan explained that the Borough used a federal grant over the last year to establish Accreditation. No Borough money was spent on it. It paid for the Borough's department to better organize. The Borough then also became a recognized Accredited agency. This project was handled in great fashion by department staff Lisa Gehr.

Chief Higgins explained that West Earl also has officers trained in the matters Mr. Martin asked about as well as others. His agency is also Accredited and for those officers wishing to join West Earl this actually makes the transition easier. The best thing to tell you about Accreditation is that it proves that an agency is required to use best practices in law enforcement. Accreditation makes you prove to outside assessors that things are being done right.

Ralph Hess of 595 East Jackson Street stated he is aware that West Earl currently has one detective and the combined force is planned to have two detectives. He thinks New Holland currently has two detectives. Who makes the decision on who West Earl selects as a detective.

Chief Bentzel replied that the Borough currently has a lieutenant/detective and a detective and if he understands the question properly, it is what criteria is used to select a detective. This was discussed with Chief Higgins and this is an appointed position. Chief Higgins did express an interest in a second detective. That will be up to West Earl to decide. He believes the Borough has two good detectives that could be considered. They will have to apply for the position if it comes available.

Chief Higgins stated he cannot say today who is going to be a sergeant or put in an executive position. It is a transparent and open process and everyone has the opportunity to apply to participate in the process.

There being no further public comment, Mayor Bender then addressed the audience, stating he has a comment to make to all these here and that is relative to those on Council including the two members who could not be here this evening. Himself, Council and the Manager all live in the Borough. Our families are here, many of our jobs are here. He wants to point out that we all have the same concerns everybody else has. It is our homes, places of business and for some

where we work. It is the town he grew up in. We are all residents of the same town and have the same concerns.

President Morgan then asked if there were anymore questions or comments from the public. There were none.

Council member Mike Ireland then made the motion that Council authorize the Manager, Consultant and Solicitor to work with West Earl Township officials to prepare a defined Police Services Agreement between the Borough and West Earl Township, to be ready prior to Council's planned continued meeting from July 1. This was seconded by John Taylor. All those present voted in favor of the motion.

President Morgan noted that Council's next regular meeting is July 1. Council will be discussing a proposal to allow qualifying officers to buy back prior police service time if they served with a different police force. The police services contract is to be scheduled for Council's continued meeting from July 1.

The meeting then adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

July 9, 2025

Date Approved