

**NORTHERN REGIONAL POLICE DEPARTMENT  
JOINT POLICE BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, January 26, 2022**

**Township of Pine Community Center**

The meeting of the Northern Regional Police Department Joint Police Board was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Chairman, Jason Bragunier.

Members in attendance were Chairman; Jason Bragunier, Vice-Chair; Pasqual D. Avolio, Raymond Kendrick, John Marshall, Richland Alternate Donna Snyder, Jack Candek, Casey White, Ryan Colombo, Victoria Laird-Pongrace. Also in attendance were Bradford Woods Mayor, Doug Marscico, Bradford Woods Alternate, Dan Dimond (non-voting), Chief John Sicilia, Captain Bryan DeWick and Treasurer Jan Kowalski. Absent from meeting was Richland representative George Allen.

**Organization Meeting**

Election of the following:

- Chair – Representative from Pine – Motion to elect Pasqual D. Avolio as Chair was made by Ryan Colombo, seconded by John Marshall. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- Vice-Chair-Representative from Bradford Woods – Motion to elect Victoria Laird-Pongrace as Vice Chair was made by Raymond Kendrick, seconded by John Marshall. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

Turn meeting over to newly appointed Chair for 2022.

**Sergeant's Oath administered to Jennifer Abbondanza**

Chief John Sicilia indicated this will be conducted next month due to Jennifer Abbondanza being unable to attend tonight's meeting. Her position took effect January 1, 2022.

Motion to elect or appoint the following:

- Chief of Police – John A. Sicilia – Motion to appoint John Sicilia as Chief of Police was made by Donna Snyder, seconded by Raymond Kendrick. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- Treasurer - Jan Kowalski – Motion to appoint Jan Kowalski as Treasurer was made by Ryan Colombo, seconded by Casey White. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- Police Board Secretary – John A Sicilia – Motion to appoint John Sicilia as Police Board Secretary was made by John Marshall, seconded by Casey White. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- Chief Administrative Officer (and alternate) for Police Pension Plan & Non-Uniformed Employee Pension Plan – Motion to appoint Raymond Kendrick as Chief Administrative Officer was made by John Marshall, seconded by Victoria Laird-Pongrace. Motion to appoint Casey White as alternate was made by John Marshall, seconded by Raymond Kendrick. The aye vote was unanimous for both motions. Motions carried.

- Newspaper of Record – Post Gazette – Motion to appoint the Post-Gazette as the Newspaper of Record was made by Victoria Laird-Pongrace, seconded by John Marshall. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- Solicitor – Tucker Arensberg – Gary Gushard – Motion to appoint Gary Gushard, Tucker Arensberg as Solicitor was made by Ryan Colombo, seconded by Casey White. John Marshall said he would like this to be an interim appointment for the next three of four months while the Department looks for a solicitor that is not a solicitor for any of the municipalities represented and suggested a motion to appoint on an interim basis. Raymond Kendrick agreed with John Marshall. An amendment to the motion was made. Pasquale Avolio made a motion to appoint Gary Gushard, Tucker Arensberg as Solicitor on an interim basis for 2022 until a new appointment is made. Ryan Colombo moved to approve, seconded by Mr. White. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried. Discussion continued with Chief John Sicilia stating he would meet on a monthly basis with the municipal Managers to provide possible recommendations to the Board for RFPs for Solicitors to the Board. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- Special Labor Counsel – Campbell Durrant, P.C. – Rich Miller – Pasquale Avolio requested a motion to appoint Special Labor Counsel identifying Campbell Durrant, Rich Miller the Labor Council Representative. Donna Snyder made a motion to appoint Campbell Durrant, Rich Miller as Special Labor Counsel, seconded by Raymond Kendrick. Jason Bragunier suggested an amendment to appointing on an interim basis as well. Pasquale Avolio made a motion to amend the previous motion to appoint Campbell Durrant Special Labor Counsel for Northern Regional Police Board with Rich Miller as the interim primary contact. Raymond Kendrick made a motion to approve, seconded by Donna Snyder. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- 2022 Citizen at Large for the Pension Trust Committee – Tim Rubritz (2<sup>nd</sup> year of two-year term ending December 31, 2022) – Pasquale Avolio requested a motion. Ryan Colombo made a motion to approve, seconded by Jason Bragunier. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- Police Finance Committee - one member from each municipality plus the Treasurer – Discussion took place as to whether to have one member be the Township manager or one Board member from each municipality for finance oversight. Pasquale Avolio stated representatives for an Audit Committee can be appointed, but he is not going to ask for a motion on the Finance Committee because from a procedural and Roberts Rules perspective, there is nothing in the police agreement or any bylaws that create a separate finance committee that establish procedures. Pasquale Avolio said the Board does need Audit Committee Representatives. With that, Pasquale Avolio stated a motion is needed to appoint Audit Representatives rather than Finance Committee members. Victoria Laird-Pongrace made a motion to appoint Audit Committee Representatives for 2022 to consist of Victoria Laird-Pongrace, Bradford Woods; Jason Kratsas, Pine; Raymond Kendrick, Richland; and Julie Bastianini, Marshall, seconded by Raymond Kendrick. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

### **Approval of Minutes from the November 18, 2021 Meeting**

John Marshall made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 18, 2021 meeting, seconded by Jack Candek. Victoria Laird-Pongrace stated on Page 6 under Police Board Comments, she would like added "Victoria Laird-Pongrace stated that the incident happened as a result of the officers not understanding the CBA arbitration award, negotiation process and salary step implementation." Ryan Colombo indicated he would like to revisit Item No. 4 and confirm what was said from the meeting audio. Pasquale Avolio said that there is a proposed amendment to add Victoria Laird-Pongrace's comment and to investigate the recording to see if that action was referred to the request of Item No. 4. Ryan Colombo made a motion to accept the amendment to the minutes by Bradford Woods, seconded by John Marshall. Pasquale Avolio requested a motion to table the minutes from the November meeting to allow the audio recordings to be

reviewed with respect to the comments and with the amendment that was approved and the comments to be investigated and identified whether there was an actual action. John Marshall moved to approve, seconded by Ryan Colombo. The aye vote was unanimous. Casey White and Donna Snyder abstained. Motion carried.

### **Chief's Reports**

Victoria Laird-Pongrace stated there are inconsistencies in the numbers of citations and warnings. Captain DeWick provided a brief explanation of the reasoning for discrepancies. Captain DeWick indicated in mid-December there was a significant bar fight in Pine. In December there was a death in Bradford Woods. The Department continues to see many gun cases out of Keystone Shooting Center in Marshall Township. Recently, officers investigated a case and recovered several guns at the suspects residence. There has been an increase in mental health calls over the last eight months. In the last six weeks there were 22 mental health calls, some involved officers transporting a patient to Western Psych or Heritage Valley. There have been 29 domestic calls over the last six weeks. Since Thanksgiving there have been 19 officers off for Covid. Captain DeWick commended the officers who filled in throughout the holidays and these illnesses without complaint. Raymond Kendrick questioned the School Resource Officer and the reporting from the school districts. Chief John Sicilia responded that an officer reports on a weekly basis, and if something significant happens the Department is alerted right away. The SRT team participates in active shooter training regularly. John Marshall made a motion to adopt the November and December report, seconded by Jason Bragunier. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

### **Treasurer's Reports**

Jan Kowalski provided a financial update on the November and December Treasurer's reports. The Department ended 2021 with a surplus. Overall, they were \$102,000 favorable to the budget. Pasquale Avolio questioned if it made sense to make an earlier pension contribution rather than waiting for the State Aid. Jan Kowalski recommended waiting until the audit is completed and the surplus is confirmed to make any decisions. Victoria Laird-Pongrace made motion to approve both November and December Treasurer's Financial Reports for 2021, seconded by Ryan Colombo. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

### **Comments from Police Board Members**

John Marshall commented there is a lot of concern about speeding on Grandview, and that the Police are doing good for our residents and that is very much appreciated.

Jason Bragunier commented that he would like Chief John Sicilia and Captain Bryan DeWick to let the officers know the Board is appreciative, and they are thanked for keeping everyone safe. At the November meeting there were some strong accusations made about ethics. Jason Bragunier stated that he believes this Board should receive state ethics training for boards.

Victoria Laird-Pongrace welcomed the Bradford Woods Borough alternate member to the meeting.

John Marshall additionally commended the officers for handling of an incident in Richland Township.

Casey White thanked the Police Department for their hard work and service.

Pasquale Avolio stated last year, at one point, there were some discussions about if there is any interest in forming an Ad-hoc Committee to look at the specific desires of the Department, how it functions, costs

associated therewith and the varying needs of the constituent communities. Pasquale Avolio stated if the municipalities are interested, perhaps the Board can start that discussion by bringing this back up under Business at a future meeting. Jason Bragunier suggested adding to next month's agenda.

### **Old Business**

1. Discussion of Agreement to Provide Administrative Services between NRPD and Township of Pine, with possible motion to approve – John Marshall made a motion to table and refer to Chief John Sicilia and the Township Managers, seconded by Jack Candek. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
2. Discussion of Agreement to Provide Administrative Services between NRPD Pension Trust Committee and Township of Pine, with possible motion to approve – John Marshall made a motion to table and referred to Chief John Sicilia and the Township Managers, seconded by Casey White. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
3. Continuation of Discussion of Finance Committee Responsibilities – Victoria Laird-Pongrace made a motion to table, seconded by John Marshall. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

### **New Business**

1. Authorization for the Chief Administrative Officer (or Alternate), to sign the 2022 Annual Data Request for Mockenhaupt Benefits Group to provide the following services for the Police Pension Fund:

- 2022 Actuarial Valuation Report
- 2022 Employee Statements
- GASB Financial Statements as of December 31, 2021

Ryan Colombo made a motion to authorize the Chief Administrative Officer (or Alternate) to sign the 2022 Annual Data Request for Mockenhaupt Benefits Group, seconded by Casey White. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

2. Authorization for the Chief Administrative Officer (or Alternate), to sign the 2021 Department of the Auditor General NRPD Non-Uniform Defined Contribution Act 205 Filing – Ryan Colombo made a motion to authorize the Chief Administrative Officer (or Alternate) to sign the 2021 Department of the Auditor General NRPD Non-Uniform Defined Contribution Act 205 Filing, seconded by Jason Bragunier. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
3. Motion to approve payment of \$5,001.65 to Township of Pine for additional staff time to provide 2021 administrative support – Raymond Kendrick made a motion to approve, seconded by John Marshall. Raymond Kendrick discussed the long-term staffing needs of the Police Department Administrative staff. Pasquale Avolio suggested providing a job description to Chief John Sicilia and to work with the Township Managers to move forward with advertising of the open position. Chief John Sicilia indicated the Department needs a short-term solution while they look at a big picture solution. Chief John Sicilia would like to look at a big picture, plan, and budget for next year. Chief John Sicilia indicated he will meet with the Township Managers to discuss in greater detail. Pasquale Avolio commented that there are financial benefits to the current administrative arrangement with Pine Township, such as discounted pricing on software, and that segregating the duties may mean there are additional costs to the Police Department. He would like to understand the big picture of what the costs are and the long-term implications of different administrative staffing alternatives. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

4. Resolution 2022-1 "A Motion to Establish NRPD Hiring Procedures" – Chief John Sicilia stated the Department never had a set of guidelines for the hiring process. Ryan Colombo made a motion to table to provide comments regarding the procedures. The Department will provide the application to Ryan Colombo for his review and comment, seconded by John Marshall. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
5. Authorization to Administer Police Entry Level Exam, date to be determined – John Marshall made a motion to authorize, seconded by Raymond Kendrick. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
6. Authorization to Hire New Officer Candidate, start date February 28, 2022 – Jason Bragunier made a motion to hire Justin Ryan Welling, seconded by Ryan Colombo. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

**Any Other Business** – None.

**Correspondence** – None.

**Executive Session**

John Marshall made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 9:15 P.M to discuss personnel, seconded by Ryan Colombo. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

John Marshall made a motion to return to public session at 9:47 P.M., seconded by Casey White. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

Upon return to Public Session, at 9:48 P.M., Jack Candek made a motion to accept Officer Madison Harris' request to receive Heart and Lung benefits as a result of an on-duty crash on January 10, 2022. Benefits to be made retroactive to date of incident, seconded by John Marshall. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

**Adjournment**

Raymond Kendrick made a motion to adjourn at 9:50 P.M., seconded by Casey White. The aye vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sheryl Snyder, Marshall Twp. Secretary