

A meeting of the Towanda Borough Police Civil Service Commission was held on November 16, 2023 in the Council Room of the Municipal Building located at 724 Main St, Towanda PA. The meeting was called to order at 11:05 a.m. by Commissioner Ryan Eberlin.

Present were Commissioners Alec Garden, Mark Henery, and Ryan Eberlin; Police Chief Randy Epler. No visitors in attendance.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the October 5, 2023 meeting were approved upon a motion by Mr. Eberlin, seconded by Mr. Henery, all in favor. Motion passed to approve the minutes as presented.

### **New Business**

- **Applicants**

As presented in written format from testing proctor, Mrs. Jene Conklin, applicants, Michael LaManna and Trevor Wills both passed the Written Examination on October 21, 2023 with overall average scores of 92.50% (LaManna) and 86.25% (Wills). Mr. Wills passed the Physical Agility Test; and Oral Examination testing with an overall average grade of 88.67%. Chief Epler noted there was a change in the interviewers due to scheduling conflicts; David Jurnack and Lou Alteri, were replaced by Justin Popovich (Bradford County Probation Department) and Tyler Roof, local business owner.

Chief Epler reported applicant, Michael LaManna, had withdrawn from further testing as he decided to stay with his current employer with the Bradford County Drug Task Force as a Detective.

- **Recommendation to Council**

Chief Epler stated his recommendation to Borough Council is to hire Trevor Wills part-time to train him for a couple of months; he is a 21-year-old, first-time police officer graduating from the Mansfield Academy this date. Chief Epler noted he has spoken with Mr. Wills working as a part-timer, probably working 40 plus hours per week and he is thrilled at the opportunity. Once Mr. Wills has proven himself to "us" (Chief Epler and the Borough), he would be offered full-time employment. Mr. Henery asked Chief Epler if there is anything in the contract that specifies a period of time such as six-month probationary; Chief Epler responded Yes for full-time, the first six-months you basically are an at-will employee just like if you were a part-time employee.

Commissioner Eberlin appointed Laurie McGuire to do a certification list to Borough Council listing Trevor Wills as an eligible candidate for appointment to a police position in the Towanda Borough Police Department. The certification list will be in the next meeting packets of the Borough Council.

- Discussion & Advertisement of a New Applicant Pool List

Chief Epler suggested there be put together a package of what the Borough pays in salary range, covers for insurance, and other benefits thinking maybe it pulls in someone who wouldn't otherwise apply. Borough Manager, Lauren Hotaling, would advise what is proper to include in the package and then come back to the Commission for what to put into an advertisement.

Mr. Henery asked Chief Epler where does Towanda Borough stand for the area pay scale. Chief Epler responded he believes we are second behind Sayre Borough in salaries; everyone has had to bump up their game to keep from losing officers. Mr. Henery asked Mr. Eberlin if from Council's perspective are the police locked in and the budget set. Mr. Eberlin answered no the budget has not been set yet and is being worked on with a budget meeting in the coming week; there is always enough flexibility for adjustments, they can be done but the union contract has to be considered. Council has considered offering stipends or a sign-on bonus. Chief Epler added there is a grant that has been applied for that would allow offering sign-on bonuses; however, the Borough has not yet been awarded the grant and should know something soon.

Chief Epler stated it was actually Sergeant Lantz's idea to advertise with a benefit package included; he will tell him tonight to write up a nice, clean looking package that covers the high points and get it to Lauren Hotaling to approve and Laurie McGuire will put the new revised advertisement out in the newspaper. At this time, Chief Epler feels the Act 120 matter doesn't need to be included in the current newspaper ad but when the advertisement would go out national on Police One bulletin board or Indeed.com the full understanding of Act 120 will need to be addressed. Any changes to Act 120 have been tabled by Borough Council at this time as reported by Chief Epler.

A motion was made by Mr. Henery, seconded by Mr. Garden to run a newspaper advertisement of an Applicant Pool List from December 1, 2023 to January 12, 2024. Motion carried.

- Corporal Position Opening

Chief Epler reported there is a position for a Corporal which the Borough has OK'd. There used to be two Sergeants; as soon as he became Chief, he requested it fixed and the chain of command to be Chief – Corporal – Sergeant. There was never testing for the Corporal position because he felt

it would have potentially created a conflict amongst the staff he had at that time and didn't want to create that kind of animosity in his police station. He explained there would be an Interview Board established; that Board would score it out and then the Civil Service Commission would accept the Interview Board results and then recommend the candidate to the Borough Council. Mr. Chief Epler stated there could possibly be three that would apply, two which would have military preference.

Chief Epler requested adding to the agenda of the next meeting be to set a Corporal Interview Board.

### **Old Business**

- Physical Agility Test

Chief Epler discussed moving forward with changes to the requirements of the physical agility testing and expressed his overview of what standards he feels need to be removed, modified, or something new added to challenge the applicants. He will draw up the changes including the MOPEC standards for the Commission to review and decide what they want to adopt. He will email the physical standards to the Commission to peruse before deciding.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Police Civil Service Commission will be Wednesday, January 17, 2024 at 11:00 a.m.

### **Adjournment**

Unanimous adjournment of the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Laurie L. McGuire*

Laurie L. McGuire  
Recording Secretary