



# PLYMOUTH TOWNSHIP

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY – PENNSYLVANIA

# CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

### PLYMOUTH TOWNSHIP CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

Thursday, March 14, 2024

A meeting of the Plymouth Township Civil Service Commission was held at the Greater Plymouth Community Center on Thursday, March 14, 2024.

The following Commissioners were present:

Karen Mabry  
Paulette Jones  
Ardis Lukens  
Chris Olszyk

Chief John Myrsiades, Lt. Doug Copestick and Scott Badami participated by invitation.

#### **Call to Order** – Chair Mabry

Chair Mabry called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. and welcomed all to the March meeting.

#### **Moment of Silence**

Chair Mabry led a moment of silence and tribute to remember the late Joseph Subbio, the former Chair of this Commission who recently passed away. Godspeed Joe.

#### **February 2024 Minutes**

*Upon Motion, duly made and seconded,* the Commission (4-0) approved the minutes of the February 2024 meeting.

#### **Police Department Report**

Chief Myrsiades gave the Police Department report. He began by noting Officer Marinello's retirement and that the department has hired Megan Wieczenski to fill his position. Officer Wieczenski, who was sworn in earlier in the week, has ten years of experience as a nurse in emergency medicine.



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While she is new to law enforcement, both of her grandfathers were police officers. Officer Wieczenski joined the meeting and the Commission welcomed her to Plymouth Township.

Next, Chief Myrsiades recognized Officer Chris Kearns, who was recently promoted to First Class and is now with the detective unit. Indeed, the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office has already reached out to have Officer Kearns work with them as needed.

The majority of Chief Myrsiades' presentation, however, was his comprehensive Police Department Report addressing public safety challenges throughout Plymouth Township. The Chief strongly believes in tracking and data – and his department has been collecting data year by year. To begin with, the Chief noted that over the past 25 years, the department has only hired two additional officers and one civilian to the ranks. During this time, Plymouth has seen six new hotels (including two hotels which are now largely used for housing the homeless and victims of drug dependency as well as one hotel which is a part of the witness protection program). Additionally, calls to the department from the Metroplex concerning robberies are now more than from the Plymouth Meeting Mall.

While Plymouth has a small town feel, we now have big town concerns. Indeed, estimates are about 500,000 people travel through Plymouth on the various highways that intersect our Township. And this activity level is going to increase as we continue to build single family homes, apartments, and town homes. He also noted there are pending development applications from Royal Farms and other retailers.

Our department is also seeing criminals using low level "mules" from organized gangs who come and go into our Township. This has resulted in an almost 75% increase in police activity – but our resources have remained constant. Indeed, total arrests were significantly up in 2023 and those numbers are on pace to increase again in 2024. While the number of arrests are going up, Chief Myrsiades was clear that raw arrest numbers "are not what we are about" and Plymouth has "no ticket quotas." We act in the best interest of saving lives.



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Because of the increases in retail, residential, and business locations, activity for the department continues to steadily rise as well. An unfortunate part of the increase are calls related to domestic disputes. In addition to criminal activity at all levels, the Chief also noted that bail reform efforts also put more emphasis on releasing suspects earlier.

While everyone can be frustrated at times with the increase in activity, Chief Myrsiades noted one plan is to have officers work in “zones” such that local businesses can directly call the officer(s) responsible for that zone. And with specific officers in specific zones, the Chief believes that crime will go down as more of our officers are seen. To be sure, there is a fine line to walk as businesses don’t want to be perceived as calling the police too frequently as it can be disruptive to shoppers who could feel uncomfortable if officers are seen removing suspects in custody from stores.

Another challenge is when a criminal enterprise targets a car dealership. One car will break through a closed gate and the other drivers will steal cars and quickly head to a highway. While the local highways and intersections are helpful to the community, they can also easily be used by criminals.

Next up, Plymouth also has Code Blue shelters in cold weather as well as areas for otherwise unhoused people. All of this results in more police activity.

The fact of the matter is that many of our neighboring municipalities are “bedroom communities” lacking the infrastructure and business combinations of Plymouth. For example, Norristown and Upper Merion have 50% more police officers than does Plymouth. Indeed, Upper Merion just added ten new officers.

Now, to be sure, Chief Myrsiades was clear that Plymouth remains a safe community – only that activity has and will continue to increase given the nature of business and traffic in the Township. To that end, the Chief has reached out to Council with a proposal to hire four new officers and one new civilian for the department. If those efforts are successful, the Chief will be coming to the CSC to assist with finding the new candidates.

Chief Myrsiades believes we can come together to find better and more diverse candidates for the Township.



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#### **Discussion Items**

Chair Mabry asked about the 2023 annual report. Solicitor Badami noted he spoke with counsel for the Township, and he will work with the Chair to ensure we comply with the Township code.

#### **Public Comment**

No members of the public had any comments.

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business (one motion having been passed), the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15 pm.

#### **Next meeting of the Commission**

Thursday, April 11, 2024 at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Scott M. Badami  
Solicitor