

Village of Wolcott  
Board of Trustees  
Public Informational Meeting  
June 17, 2008  
6:00 PM

Mayor Monson called the Public Informational Meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Members Present: Mayor Monson, Trustees Baker, Banks and White  
Members Absent: Trustee Freer

Others Present: Colleen Penta, Kathy Buckalew, Lori Tyler, Larry Hogan, Ron Lancy, Daphne Dudus, Chuck Dudus, Mary Steighler, Bill Steighler, David Urban, Jerry Laird, Joseph Wollek, Clyde Smith, Cathy Smith, Norma Stewart, Robert Stewart, Kevin Costello, Heather Sullivan, Ken VanFleet, Elsie Revier, Donna Graham, Sue Scott, Nicki Henner, Jim Henner, Robert Delf, Corey Tyler, George Buckalew, Cypriana Porter, Tom Connor, Shirley Stewart, Mike Caywood, Brian Reitz, Jim Keenan, Phil LaRussa, June Tyler and Tom Mettler

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Monson stated that the purpose of the meeting was to obtain public opinion regarding the future direction and state of the Village of Wolcott Police Department. He showed a Power Point presentation summarizing the options for law enforcement coverage available for the Village.

- The NYS Troopers currently answer calls in the Village but are unable to schedule officers specifically for coverage within the Village. Mayor Monson spoke with Captain Swain who stated that additional coverage might be possible for special events but not guaranteed. The NYS Troopers answer calls from 911 and there is no option for a law enforcement contract between the Village and the Troopers.
- Wayne County Sherriff's Office currently schedules officers to cover areas which include the Village, and their officers will issue tickets within the Village. However, there are not funds available in their budget to schedule additional deputies in our area. They would be willing to discuss with the Village Board a contract for coverage should the Board wish more information.
- The Village of Wolcott Police Department has averaged 80 – 100 hours of coverage per week, although coverage has been less the past several months.
- The budget for the Village of Wolcott for the fiscal year ending May 31, 2009 includes appropriations for the Police Department as follows:

**Breakdown of Police Department Costs for FY 2008-2009**

| <b>Account</b>                                          | <b>Description</b>           | <b>Budget 2008-09</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| A1910.4                                                 | Unallocated Insurance        | \$7,767.00            |
| A3120.1                                                 | Personal Services            | \$100,000.00          |
| A3120.2                                                 | Equipment                    | \$2,000.00            |
| A3120.4                                                 | Contractual                  | \$9,500.00            |
| A9015.8                                                 | Police Retirement            | \$12,000.00           |
| A9030.8                                                 | Social Security              | \$7,650.00            |
| A9040.8                                                 | Worker's Compensation        | \$1,317.00            |
| A9050.8                                                 | Unemployment                 | \$465.00              |
| A9055.8                                                 | Disability Insurance         | \$310.00              |
| A9060.8                                                 | Hospital & Medical Insurance | \$12,000.00           |
| Total Department Appropriations Per FY 2008-2009 Budget |                              | <u>\$153,009.00</u>   |
| Total A Fund Appropriations Per FY 2008-2009 Budget     |                              | <u>\$915,220.00</u>   |
| Department Percentage of Total Budgeted Appropriations  |                              | <u>17%</u>            |

Mayor Monson opened the floor for public comments.

**Robert and Norma Stewart**

Mr. and Mrs. Stewart stated that Wayne County is paying the highest tax rates in New York State and they are concerned about rising costs. They think it might be better to “tighten the belt” now and want to see something for their tax dollars. Money is tight but it is only going to get tighter and they feel the Village should not have a Police Department but would it be possible to experiment with the options.

**Clyde Smith**

Mr. Smith agreed with the statement made about tax rates but then stated that he raised four boys in the Village and thanks the Village Police Department for assisting him along the way in several facets. A Village Police Department understands our small town better and can deal with things from a local perspective. The Village Police Department has also helped with calls for the Fire Department and Mr. Smith feels that a Village Police Department is necessary but should not result in increased taxes.

**David Urban**

Mr. Urban represented his uncle Larry Masters, and his mother Valerie Mills, business owners in the Village of Wolcott. The family is pro-law enforcement. The Police Department used to walk the streets checking doors at night and the police car was visible in the Village. Kids are getting out of control now and a Police Department presence in the Village is necessary to deter them from getting into or causing trouble. The response time is longer with Sheriffs or Troopers if those officers are not already in the Village at the time of the call. The undercover officer working for the Village was a step in the right direction. The Sherriff’s Department does not patrol the whole Village and the problem areas are getting out of control.

**Robert and Joyce Loveless**

Mayor Monson read a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Loveless stating that they felt that not having a Police Department would lead to more crime, more problems with kids and speeding. They feel that not having a Police Department is scary and that safety should be the first concern for the Village Board.

**Robert Delf**

Mr. Delf stated that he is in favor of a Village Police Department but that should the Board choose to abolish the department the money saved shouldn’t be spent elsewhere but should instead be used to reduce taxes.

**Tom Connor**

Mr. Connor is in favor of a Village Police Department, which offers a more personal service to residents. The turnover rate for NYS Troopers over the past few years has been very high. However, he also stated that the Village Police Department needs to be run more efficiently.

**Daphne Dudus**

Mrs. Dudus would like the same form of law enforcement that Williamson has, in that there is no Village Police Department. That area is patrolled by Sheriffs and NYS Troopers and there is no need for a Village Police Department.

**Chuck Dudus**

Mr. Dudus stated that others have already made good points. He doesn't think a Village Police Department will have any effect on the drug problem and that spending 17% of the budget on the Department is a lot of money. He would like to know more about contracting with the Wayne County Sherriff's Department and suggested that the Village Police Department be stopped for one year to see what happens. If it turns out it was a mistake than just bring the Department back.

**Donna Graham**

Donna Graham agrees with the comments made by Mr. and Mrs. Dudus and questioned the Board as to "Do we really need a Police Department"? She would like to try a year with no Department and see where we are at. The Village needs community/neighborhood watches and she feels that parents should be taking care of their own children rather than calling the Police Department to do it. She feels the Police Department should be abolished.

**Lori Tyler**

Mrs. Tyler is 100% in favor of the Police Department. She stated that the Troopers and Sheriffs are not able to respond quickly and we need a Village Police Department. She is worried about safety if there were no Department and feels that crime would increase.

**Corey Tyler**

Mr. Tyler wants to keep the Police Department but also stated that the officers need to be scheduled when their service is required not when it is convenient for them. He then stated that if the Department were to be abolished the Village taxes should go down.

**Ken VanFleet**

Mr. VanFleet agreed with the comments made by Mr. Dudus and added that there are significant administrative costs associated with running a Police Department. A contract with the Wayne County Sherriff's Department would allow the Village to concentrate efforts when there is a legitimate need, such as at certain times of the year such as June through September.

**Gary Lockwood**

As Mr. Lockwood was unable to attend the meeting, Mayor Monson spoke on Mr. Lockwood's behalf.

Mr. Lockwood is in favor of a Police Department as long as doors are checked and officers are not just driving around the Village. If that would not be the case, then he would favor a community policing policy.

**Joe Wollek**

Mr. Wollek is 100% in favor of a Village Police Department.

**Larry Hogan**

Mr. Hogan stated that without knowing more information about the costs associated with a contract with the Wayne County Sherriff's Department it was impossible to make any kind of comparison. He doesn't feel that a Police Chief is necessary. He would rather see an Officer in Charge who is paid hourly and punches a time clock as this would allow more accountability.

**Nikki Henner**

Mrs. Henner is 100% in favor of keeping the Police Department. She feels comfortable and safe with a Village Police Department. She and her husband own the Wolcott Hotel and the Village Police Department has always responded within minutes when an officer was on duty. She stated that the Board should possibly look into cutting costs by restructuring the Department to one full-time and one part-time but that the bottom line was to look at options to make it possible to keep a Police Department.

**Jim Henner**

Mr. Henner is 100% in favor of the Police Department. He stated that often during early morning hours there are a lot of kids out on the streets and the response time for Sheriffs and Troopers is too long. He feels that the Village shouldn't be investing money in a new truck or back hoe but should instead sell that equipment and use the money to keep the Police Department.

**Kathy Buckalew**

Mrs. Buckalew manages the Pit Stop and stated that the Village Police officers have always made her and her employees feel safe when opening and closing the store.

**Colleen Penta**

Colleen Penta works at the Pit Stop and stated that the Village Police officers make her feel safe when she is alone at the store, especially when opening or closing.

**Bill Steighler**

Mr. Steighler is in favor of abolishing the Police Department. He stated that if the Department remains, though, it should be staffed by no more than three part-time officers which would cut the budget by at least a third. He doesn't see where the Village Police Department is effective. Mr. Steighler stated he would be in favor of abolishing the Department for a year. He also stated that in regards to businesses having doors checked by Police officers, the owners need to be locking their own doors and shouldn't need someone to check for them.

**Marilyn Steighler**

Mrs. Steighler stated that a Police Chief was not necessary and that two or three part-time officers would be sufficient. Such changes would bring down the costs in the budget. She feels that there is some need for a Village Police Department but not a Police Chief.

**Sue Scott**

The Police Department is the most important department in a small Village and if the budget is a problem we should be looking at other ways to cut costs. It is hard to put a price on public safety.

**Tim Garrard**

Trustee White read a letter from Tim Garrard, who was unable to attend the meeting.

Mr. Garrard is against abolishing the Police Department.

**Jerry Laird**

Mr. Laird stated that the Village should keep the Police Department but that it should be more visible.

**Shirley Stewart**

Ms. Stewart is “sitting on the fence” right now. She stated that the Police Department is a big chunk of our budget but that we need to know if we are getting our money’s worth. She would like to see detailed statistics on the activity of the Department and more information on what a contract with the Wayne County Sherriff’s Department would mean.

**Elsie Reviere**

Elsie Reviere definitely wants a Police Department. She lives alone and the presence of a Village Police Department makes her feel safe.

**Phil LaRussa**

Mr. LaRussa stated that more information than what is available now would be necessary in order to make any kind of decision. The type of information he would like to see would be number of arrests last year, by whom, what time of day, etc. If the Police Department is patrolling do they record the mileage driven in the police car? The Village Police officers are never mentioned in the newspapers. Are they doing their job?

**Mike Caywood**

Mr. Caywood stated that there have been management problems with the Police Department in the past and that the problems need to be fixed. Regardless, though, the Department needs to stay.

**Chuck Dudus**

Mr. Dudus asked if the Village Police Department was required to have a Police Chief. Mayor Monson stated that he would come back to Mr. Dudus with an answer.

**David Urban**

Mr. Urban stated that the tax rate in Williamson is higher than in Wolcott, even though they do not have a Police Department.

Daphne Dudus responded to Mr. Urban’s comment by stating that taxes won’t be increased if we have no private Police Department.

**Ken VanFleet**

Mr. VanFleet asked what success the Village has had with hiring part-time officers. Mayor Monson stated that he would answer Mr. VanFleet’s question but wanted to let anyone else make comments first.

**Cipriana Porter**

Mrs. Porter stated that a part-time force is not working but that more information is needed before a decision could be made. Mrs. Porter also stated that any problems with kids on the street are a product of no accountability at home and it is not the responsibility of the Police Department.

**June Tyler**

Mrs. Tyler feels that the Police Department is necessary.

**Mayor Monson**

- Mayor Monson reminded all in attendance that if they need emergency assistance they should call 911.
- Regarding a contract for coverage, Sherriff Piscioti is willing to come and speak with the Board. They do not currently have a contract with any municipality in Wayne County but would like to explore the options. There are no estimates for costs yet.

### **Mayor Monson (Continued)**

- There is a shortage of law enforcement officers in Wayne County right now. Training for NYS Troopers is six months but it ends up being a year before they are able to patrol.
- The question of whether or not we need a Chief or Officer in Charge is up in the air right now. There are court rulings that say we need a Chief but the Board has met with the Personnel Director for Wayne County Civil Service and were told that a Chief was not required. The Village Police Department could operate without a Chief but we may be open to a lawsuit at that point and would be testing the strength of previous court rulings. Other Police Departments pay Chiefs and even officers much more than the Village of Wolcott so recruiting officers can be a problem. Even though pay scale is lower than that of some other Villages the Village of Wolcott has never had to solicit part-time officers.
- The budget is not an issue with the Board. If you have a Police Department you need to have money to run it.

### **Daphne Dudus**

Mrs. Dudus stated that she had been told that when an officer signed in to 911 for service they could not patrol on foot. Mayor Monson responded that was not true.

### **Mayor Monson**

Mayor Monson feels that the issues with kids vandalizing and defacing Village property is a big problem. The purpose of this meeting was to find out what the public thought and it is evident that there is a wide difference of opinions. Mayor Monson stated that he has arrest records and ticket records for the past twelve months. Mike Caywood stated that arrests and tickets are only part of Village community policing and Mayor Monson agreed.

### **David Urban**

Mr. Urban asked if 911 records were available for when and where officers are dispatched. Mayor Monson responded yes but there are also instances with walk-in complaints or phone calls and the blotter was the only source of full information on the activity of the Police Department.

### **Jerry Laird**

Mr. Laird asked if the blotter entries could be published in the newspapers. Mayor Monson stated that the newspapers do not request any information from us.

### **Larry Hogan**

Mr. Hogan stated that past performance is not a good indicator of what is needed or what should be done with the Police Department.

### **Daphne Dudus**

Mrs. Dudus lives on Main Street and also owns a business on Main Street and has witnessed several instances of individuals walking up and down the street with open alcohol containers and using foul language. Such behavior is a deterrent to people shopping locally.

### **Clyde Smith**

Mr. Smith has seen officers in front of the Fire Hall when the games at the Elks Club fields let out. The police presence makes people drive slower which is safer for the children. He has seen a noticeable difference in that particular type of situation when an officer is available.

**Donna Graham**

Ms. Graham asked what the Village Attorney has said regarding the need for a Police Chief. Mayor Monson responded that Art William's opinion is that we would be testing court rulings by operating without a Chief but that the Village has insurance to cover any resulting lawsuit.

**Mayor Monson**

Mayor Monson stated that according to a recent article in the newspaper, the Village of Liverpool and the Towns of Clay and Solvay all had abolished their Police Departments but that the Village of Liverpool eventually brought theirs back. Mayor Monson would like to visit these municipalities to discuss their individual experiences regarding Police Departments.

**Chuck Dudus**

Mr. Dudus asked what the success rate has been for our community to solve its own problems. Mayor Monson responded that the Village of Wolcott has never had a community policing group. Mr. Dudus stated that perhaps we should because it would allow for more information on alternatives to the Police Department.

**Larry Hogan**

Mr. Hogan stated that if Mayor Monson is going to visit the Village of Liverpool and the Towns of Clay and Solvay, how do you compare their situation to ours. He then stated that he didn't feel that our Village was large enough to require a Police Chief.

**Phil LaRussa**

Mr. LaRussa stated that in the past Police Department visibility has been a problem.

**Mike Caywood**

Mr. Caywood asked if there was a cost savings for having an Officer in Charge versus a Police Chief. Mayor Monson responded yes, and that a Police Chief must also pass an exam.

**Daphne Dudus**

Mrs. Dudus asked what the next step would be.

**Mayor Monson**

Mayor Monson stated that the Board would need to digest the comments made but that he personally would like to keep the Police Department. Ultimately; however, they must do what is best for the Village of Wolcott.

**Trustee Banks**

Trustee Banks stated that the Board would need to gather the referred to data.

**Mayor Monson**

Mayor Monson stated that abolishing the Police Department is subject to a permissive referendum. The Board could vote to abolish the Department, the action would be advertised, the public could put together a petition and signatures from 20% of the registered voters in the Village of Wolcott would result in a public vote on the matter. Trustee Banks stated that either way the Board needs more information.

**Robert Stewart**

Mr. Stewart asked if there would be another special meeting or would the Board meet next at the regularly scheduled meeting.

**Mayor Monson**

Mayor Monson responded that the next scheduled Board meeting was July 8, 2008 at 7:00pm. However, the Board may choose to call a special meeting prior to that date and if they do, the meeting will be properly posted.

**Chuck Dudus**

Mr. Dudus asked what the current coverage was for the Police Department.

**Mayor Monson**

Mayor Monson responded that at present we have two part-time officers but that we may look at increasing the scheduled hours or even adding another part-time officer. The Board is doing as much as possible at the moment given the resources currently available.

Trustee Banks made the motion to adjourn the June 17<sup>th</sup> meeting at 7:15pm. Trustee White seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie A. Countryman  
Clerk/Treasurer