

A Police Advisory Board meeting was held on the above date in the Town Hall Council Chambers with the following members in attendance: Chairman David Thomas, Carol Bright, Billy Warrick, Jim Reynolds, Luke Luckini, and Martin Bradshaw. Middletown Police Chief William Texter was also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Thomas.

**AGENDA:****1. CALEA Accreditation and Standards Advancement**

The Middletown Police Department secured reaccreditation and committed to advancing from basic to advanced CALEA accreditation, which requires significantly more standards compliance (over 400 policies versus around 100 currently).

- Chief Texter highlighted that the advanced accreditation focuses more on administrative policies rather than operational ones, such as use of force, making it a more complex and long-term compliance effort.
- This move was supported by Councilman Thomas and the Mayor to demonstrate commitment to high policing standards and community trust.
- The department has maintained accreditation since 2013, with positive community feedback gathered during recent onsite reviews, including random public interviews.
- Only 9 police agencies in Delaware hold national CALEA accreditation, representing roughly 5% of U.S. law enforcement, emphasizing Middletown's leadership in meeting rigorous standards.
- The department employs a full-time accreditation manager, Kelli Burns, to continuously update policies and handle annual reviews, ensuring ongoing compliance and avoiding last-minute scrambles.

**2. Recruitment and Staffing Challenges**

Middletown Police is actively improving recruitment but remains short of target staffing levels, with 38 officers currently employed and several recruits in training or application stages.

- Chief Texter detailed a thorough, multi-step hiring process including application, written and physical testing, oral boards, background checks, and state-required psychological and medical exams; best-case hiring timeline is about three months.
- Recruitment benefits from community involvement and a professional marketing grant that targets potential candidates beyond Delaware, including New York and Philadelphia metro areas, enhancing applicant diversity.
- The department has two officers graduating from the State Police Academy in February, with additional recruits starting soon, but field training takes a minimum of 13 weeks, delaying full deployment until mid-year.
- Officers transferring from other municipalities frequently leave for positions with State Police or Capital Police due to better work schedules, making retention challenging.
- Recruitment efforts are supported by a team of recruiters and community service officers who engage in outreach beyond formal events, emphasizing continuous engagement with potential candidates.

## **Retention and Specialized Roles Development**

Retention remains a concern, but the department is at its highest staffing level ever, with plans to introduce specialized roles like a second traffic officer to address growing community needs.

- Chief Texter noted that retention efforts focus on staying competitive with salaries and benefits, while offering career development through specialized assignments to reduce patrol monotony.
- The department currently has one traffic officer but plans to restore a second traffic position to better manage increased traffic incidents and community safety.
- Specialized roles will be prioritized after new recruits complete field training and the department maintains minimum patrol staffing, likely pushing specialized assignments to late 2026 or beyond.
- These specialized positions are expected to improve officer engagement and help address complex issues like traffic enforcement and cultural shifts in the community.

### **3. Roundtable Discussion**

Chair Thomas asked the panel for their insight into how they feel the MPD has handled issues in the past year, what they have done well and what, if anything, they could be doing better.

**Luckini:** With the turbo growth Middletown has seen in the last 15 years, the department has handled things extremely well, especially with a large portion of the growth coming from residents from cities and larger communities, so there's a whole new element of change to deal with. Aside from continuing to hire more officers to keep up with growth, he didn't have concerns in a specific area.

**Bradshaw:** He agreed the biggest obstacle right now is continuing to grow the department numbers to keep up with the growth, especially for traffic concerns. He said he likes the recent zero tolerance policy for speeders and stop sign runners in the downtown area and hopes to see more of that in the future.

**Warrick:** His biggest concern is retention in the department. He said he knows historically, across all municipal departments, there is a propensity to lose officers to the Delaware State Police because they tend to offer a wide range of positions and often higher wages. However, he said he believes the leadership in the department can make staying in Middletown the biggest benefit because the officers will want to stay because they are happy with the community policing of Middletown.

**Reynolds:** His biggest compliment is the way our Middletown officers work with the community. He said he has witnessed firsthand several major accidents in the past couple of months and he was impressed with how the officers communicated with the fire department and DelDOT officials on site at these events. He said they were so professional and proficient in handling a chaotic situation.

**Bright:** She said since the Police Accountability Committee is going into its second year, she would like more guidance about what the committee is supposed to be doing. She said she would

think the committee should have a Mission Statement or other guidance. Chair Thomas said he would send out the guidance mandated in the State Code for these committees so she can read the mandates of the committee.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

**Paul Rabinovitch:** Discussed two incidents in Middletown which he said allegedly violated State Codes and would soon be in litigation. He did not describe the actual incidents, but eluded to alleged misuse of body worn camera. He said his point to speaking at this meeting was to tell the department to “do better.”

**Earnest Hargett:** Asked if the CALEA is simply police officers on the panel to judge other police officers. Chief Texter said there are civilians on the panel as well. In fact, the panelist who analyzed MPD was a circuit court judge from Michigan. Mr. Hargett also asked if MPD would start listing the demographics of those arrested in monthly police reports, specifically gender and race of everyone ticketed or arrested. Chief Texter said he would look into it.

**Cenzia Celestin-Brown:** Asked how the MPD is trained to handle cultural issues, such as how to be more informed, sensitive to other cultures. She asked if the specialized positions referred to earlier in the meeting would pertain to this type of position dealing with the various cultures moving into Town. Chief Texter said diversity training is required for sure and it is held for all officers at least once a year. He said once the department gets a larger capacity of officers, the specializations could grow to include more of what she’s asking for in her request.

**Watara Heath:** Asked how the department handles mental health crises in Town. And what about police officers’ mental well-being? Chief Texter said the department has several members who are crisis intervention trained, some also have crisis veteran response training. We are part of the Hero Help program with New Castle County who has trained social workers who can come out to help during crisis events. For MPD well-being, he said the state just announced a grant to add additional help for officers’ well-being, in addition to the Town’s EAP programs that are offered. He said he is looking forward to hearing more about the state’s initiative because any help that is available for anyone who might need it will be beneficial to all officers out on the streets.

**NEXT MEETING:** April 15, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.