Yardley to discuss police's future

Posted: Monday, January 24, 2011 12:00 am
By Gema Maria Duarte staff writer |

With Yardley's police chief scheduled to retire in December 2012, the borough will create a committee to discuss the police force's future.

The borough will appoint two residents to partake in the committee, which will meet once a month. Also part of the committee will be the mayor, one person from the Yardley Business Association, one representative from the police union and two council members.

Residents 18 years and older can apply for the committee seats by Feb. 1, said Councilwoman Katherine Cadwallader.

Police Chief James O'Neill, who earns $74,968 a year, entered the Deferred Retirement Option Plan, commonly known as DROP, on Jan. 11. The program allows an employee to keep working after signing up for DROP, but those additional years of salary aren't included in pension calculations. Instead, money is placed in an interest-bearing account that the employee can collect when he leaves the job. In O'Neill's case, his pension was frozen as of Dec. 31. He'll collect about $40,000 in a lump sum when he leaves after working two years under the DROP program, plus an estimated $35,000 a year pension, according to borough manager Bill Winslade.

O'Neill has been chief of the 2,511-resident town for 12 years, but has been with the force for about 20 years.

Making the rounds around town are two full-timers, including the chief, and seven part-time officers. This year's police budget is $412,517, which includes the average police salary of $20,100 for part-time officers and $57,000 for a full-time employee. The police officers don't contribute to their pension or health care premium.

The committees - which will have two years to look into other possible ways of running the force - is tasked with finding the most cost-effective option for the best police coverage.

Surrounding municipalities are doing the same.

Last week, Upper Makefield decided to reach out to Newtown Township - which polices its own township and adjacent Wrightstown - to begin discussions about a possible regionalized police force.

Similarly in Upper Bucks, Doylestown, Doylestown Township, New Britain and Warwick are toying with the idea of a regional police force.


Gema Maria Duarte can be reached at 215-949-4195 or gduarte@philbyBurbs.com. Follow Gema on Twitter at twitter.com/deadlineduarte.