

Amity police join Berks FOP

By Denise Larive, For 21st Century Media

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The Amity Township Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a resolution stating that the Amity Township Police Department is now represented by Berks Lodge #71 Fraternal Order of Police on July 16.

This change occurred during the police department's 2015-2018 contract negotiations with the township. The current contract, which expires Dec. 31, includes an arbitrated 3.5 percent annual increase that was unanimously approved by the board on June 6, 2012, and which was retroactive to Jan. 1, 2012.

Contract negotiations began in March 2011 with the police requesting arbitration in September 2011.

That 3.5 percent increase was additional to a four percent increase the police department arbitrated for Jan. 1, 2009 through Dec. 31, 2011.

Township Solicitor Brian F. Boland said after the current contract was negotiated that future police contract negotiations would most likely require arbitration with another three to four percent annual increase.

According to Former Supervisor and board Chairman Robert R. Yanos, after the current contract was approved that without a new and large revenue stream the township's options for 2013 with this increased expense would be to increase taxes or reduce the police force.

“ I don't see any Wawas coming in here, or Giants [grocery store], and I don't see us coming up with a great golden egg, said Supervisor Richard L. Gokey that same night. “ We have two choices -- to come up with revenue [through a tax increase] or cut the police department.”

“ The most expensive cost in our township is the police department at 3.5 percent per year, said Gokey. “ ...have to cut the most expensive part of our budget.”

The board did not reduce its police force of 11 eleven offices, which includes Police Chief Kent A. Shuebrook.

John Coe is also still employed by the police department, despite the board's vote on July 18, 2012 to furlough one officer. The board reversed its decision on Aug. 1 following a

meeting-room filled with public support for Coe that included representation by Berks Lodge #71 Fraternal Order of Police.

Amity Township's 2014 budget of \$3.9 million was approved on Dec. 4 with a .00015 fire tax millage increase. The board unanimously approved to purchase on July 16 two new polymer tanks for the Amity Township Wastewater Treatment Plant at an individual cost of \$3,681.

Township Manager Charles E. Lyon said the township office will accept until July 25 applications for the vacancy at the Wastewater Plant.

The board unanimously approved to proceed with an evaluation of the township's 224 intersection lights at a cost of \$3,500, to be performed by Entech Engineering, Reading. That evaluation will include a proposal and feasibility study with a payback analysis if the lights are converted from high pressure sodium to LED.

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