



Jenkintown Police Benevolent Association

Jenkintown, Pennsylvania



Press Release

As many members of the community are aware, news of the possible dissolution of the Jenkintown Police Department has recently come to light. This news is deeply saddening and troubling to us.

Currently, Jenkintown Borough is engaged in contract negotiations with the Jenkintown Police Benevolent Association. The Jenkintown Police Benevolent Association has engaged in these activities in good faith despite the threat that, if deep concessions were not made, the officers represented would be relieved of their duties and the department would be disbanded. In a turn of events unprecedented in recent memory, the Chief of Police has been utilized during these negotiations to bargain against the members of the department he oversees; this has caused unnecessary strain on the relationship between Chief Scott and the officers of the department.

The narrative presented in recent news releases attempts to obscure the nature and extent of the planning for the disbandment of the Jenkintown Police Department. In a recent interview with The Glenside Local, Council President Jay Conners is quoted, "No actions beyond the temporary hiring of a public relations firm have been taken" and that, "No talks or negotiations with neighboring PD have taken place as of yet." Jenkintown Borough Council contracted with Bellevue Communications in August of 2023. The total cost of that contract is at least \$20,000. In a document prepared by Bellevue on July 18th, 2023, the borough was advised that the firm would prepare documentation and talking points about, "its intention to contract with Abington Township PD" and that they "anticipate that the work set forth in this proposal will commence immediately and continue until the new contract with Abington becomes effective." Based on information obtained from the Abington Township Police Association, a meeting between Jenkintown Borough and Abington Township officials did take place in the summer of 2023 for the purpose of discussing an absorption of police services by Abington Township, though that meeting appears to have not been fruitful.

While we are aware of the borough's fiduciary responsibilities, we believe that a plan which involves disbanding a police department that has served the community for 134 years is shortsighted. In an article published by WHYY, the statistic that police protection accounts for more than 50% of the municipal budget is misleading as this figure is not atypical. In recent budgets, Ambler borough reported that its police department accounted for around 60% of the budget and Hatboro borough's police accounted for 51%. This past year, the borough purchased a brand-new Ford F250 for use by the Chief of Police at a cost nearing \$85,000. Additionally, Association membership has proposed cost saving measures, such as hiring part-time officers, which have not been implemented by the borough. Jenkintown is in an expansionary phase. New apartments, grocery stores, and retail establishments are all underway. We hope and anticipate this influx will reduce the tax burden on the individual citizen and lead to future budget surpluses which exceed even the 2023 surplus.

The officers of the Jenkintown Police Department stand ready to work alongside Jenkintown Borough Council, Mayor Lerman, Chief Scott, and the entire community of Jenkintown to reach a



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solution which does not involve the stripping of the borough's independent status. With a combined service record of 143 years, your police officers have come to think of Jenkintown as their own. We love the community and its citizens, and hope for the opportunity to continue to faithfully serve. We encourage anyone who has concerns about the proposal to disband the police department to reach out to your elected representative and to attend meetings to make your voice heard.

As a final thought, while we understand as much as any how emotionally impactful this situation may be, we ask that discourse around the subject remains civil and personal attacks against elected officials or others be avoided.