



TOMS RIVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

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On January 26, 2024, many of you probably received a letter from Mayor Daniel Rodrick mailed to all residents of Toms River. As Chief of Police, it is my duty to ensure that accurate information is disseminated so everyone in the community can make informed decisions about important matters that impact the safety and well-being of you and your family. Let me assure you that our PBA Police Officer Union, the FOP Supervisor's Union and the Chief's Office stand united with the increase in personnel in our EMT program. The overall safety of our residents is our number one priority and we are proud of our average response time of 9.6 minutes by our EMTs in a community spanning 44 square miles. Unfortunately, even with extensive recruiting efforts, the pool of EMT applicants has been almost non-existent for some time, as other agencies are also in need of emergency medical personnel. Additionally, police officers outfitted with first aid equipment and defibrillators are also dispatched to emergency medical calls and often first on the scene to start emergency treatment in anticipation of the EMTs' arrival.

Let me state clearly and unequivocally, the rank-and-file union, the supervisors' union, and I, all stand united in opposition to the elimination of two Captains positions to fund the EMT program. I have asked the Mayor for an opportunity to discuss his concerns in relation to the potential unintended consequences of his decision to implement these cuts to our command staff. I believe there is a middle ground that is mutually beneficial to all involved, the police department, the governing body, and most of all, the members of the community. In the meantime, we have applied for a grant through the NJ Division of Consumer Affairs to enter into a shared services agreement with another municipality to join forces and defray the cost. This is only one possibility. We are open to exploring others, but there is no rush to require hasty decisions that will have far-reaching implications.

The two Captains, one in the Administration Bureau and one in the Detective Bureau, along with my Deputy Chief, who commands the entire Patrol Division at a cost of \$2500 per year more than a Captain, are critical to the effective and efficient operation of the police department. They are my executive staff and each command entire bureaus totaling 335 employees (not 112) such as, sworn officers, Class 1, 2 and 3 Special Law Enforcement Officers (SLEO), as well as all civilian support personnel.

In the past, the police department had a Chief, two Deputy Chiefs and four Captains. Presently the department has a Chief and three Bureau Commanders, a reduction of four command positions. According to an independent "Comprehensive Efficiency Study" (<https://tomsrivertownship.com/DocumentCenter/View/2895/Toms-River-Efficiency-Study-PDF?bidId>) conducted by the Government Strategy Group commissioned by the governing body of the Township of Toms River dated April 19, 2021, the Toms River Police Department operates extremely "lean and

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efficient” with no recommendations to reduce personnel. The police department currently has the the same number of sworn officers (162) as 20 years ago. The context of these numbers is significant, with the increase in calls for service then from 43,885 to 65,000 per year now, and a current population close to 100,000 residents, of which, U.S Census data does not count motels or the burgeoning summer tourist population.

In his letter, the Mayor also stated that the number of patrol officers will not be decreasing. In the first ordinance reading on January 18th, it called for a Patrol Officer staffing to be 112. Current patrol staffing is at 114. The 7 new “patrolmen” the Mayor refers to are actually Seasonal or Part Time Class 1 SLEO Officers who patrol parks, the beach area and our municipal jail. These SLEO officers are not authorized to carry weapons and have no arrest powers. They are replacements for the 15 SLEO officers lost last year due to them pursuing other full-time law enforcement employment. In reality, the police department is still short eight Class 1 Officers from last year with the possibility of losing 2 full-time sworn police officers through attrition this year, dropping the total end strength of full-time sworn officers from 162 to 158.

I have proudly served this great community for 38 years, ten of those years as Chief of Police. I am honored to lead this great organization and all of the the amazing officers and support staff who dedicate their lives to serving each and every resident of Toms River through their tireless and selfless service. With your continued support, we will continue to provide the same exemplary service that you have come to expect from the professional men and women of the Toms River Police Department.

Sincerely,
MITCHELL A. LITTLE
Chief of Police