

Town of Middletown PAC Meeting Minutes – March 12, 2025 6:30PM

Attendees:

Nicole Maltby
Jimmy Reynolds
Carol Bright
Billy Warrick
Matt Kolbjornsen
Matt Luckini
Alan Jones
Martin Bradshaw
Dave Thomas, Councilman
William Texter, Chief of Police

Meeting Focus: The primary focus of the March 12, 2025 Police Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting was to assess and brainstorm improvements for the Middletown Police Department's website and digital presence, with secondary discussion on recruitment and community engagement strategies.

Key Topics Discussed:

1. Website Concerns & Feedback:

- Members criticized the current website's visual presentation, noting the image of a police car as uninviting and lacking community warmth.
- Many noted outdated content, including public notices from 2020-2023, and a general lack of user-friendliness.
- It was mentioned that while the site is primarily used for downloading applications, most prospective applicants find the department through social media, not the website.

2. Improvement Suggestions:

- Remove or update outdated notices.
- Replace static or intimidating images with community-focused photos of officers engaging with the public.

- Post short “snapshot” updates monthly to show police-community interactions.
- Highlight officer stories or short bio intros to humanize the force.
- Add a video message or greeting from the Chief of Police.
- Simplify and streamline the job application path on the website.
- Use tools like Google Pixel or analytics to track visitor behavior and prioritize updates.
- Ensure visual continuity and modern design by hiring a professional web designer or part-time communications specialist.

3. Social Media & Recruitment:

- Consensus that social media is a more effective tool for recruitment among younger generations.
- Suggested platforms: TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts.
- Proposed creation of short-form content with safety tips, officer intros, and behind-the-scenes glimpses.
- Leverage seasonal employees or interns to assist with content generation.
- Interest in integrating polling and community feedback tools through the site/social media.

4. Recruitment & Outreach:

- Emphasis on promoting the department’s competitive benefits: \$74,000 starting salary, 20-year pension, paid training, and educational reimbursement.
- Outreach efforts continue across Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and South Jersey.
- Signing bonuses of \$5,000–\$10,000 were noted as recruitment incentives.
- Discussion on converting seasonal hires (“yellow shirts”) into full-time recruits.
- Some hesitation from officers to share personal info on public-facing platforms due to privacy and safety concerns.

5. Resource Challenges:

- Acknowledged that website updates are not part of officers' skillsets.
- Chief and others expressed the need for dedicated staff for website and social media management.
- Suggested seeking budget allocation for a civilian communications role or professional firm to manage the site.
- Committee expressed interest in advocating to the Town Council for this support.

6. Citizen Training & Engagement:

- Notification that all PAC members must participate in citizen police training or ride-alongs totaling 20 hours of training prior to end of the year.
- One member shared a positive experience from a recent ride-along.

Action Items:

- Compile all PAC feedback into a summary for town leadership.
- Explore budget options for hiring a dedicated communications/web/social media manager.
- Develop a content calendar or mock-up for potential web/social improvements.
- Consider polling tools and feedback forms integrated into the site/social channels.
- Follow up on interest in future citizen engagement opportunities (e.g., ride-alongs, town hall webinars).