

Below are answers to several questions that were asked by a resident during the Council meeting on August 5, 2020.

Chief Watson

1. Do Swissvale police officers have a requirement to live within Swissvale, or can officers from outside the borough work for SPD?
  - a. Swissvale Police Officers do not have any residency requirement.
2. What percentage of the Swissvale budget is the Swissvale Police Department?
  - a. The Swissvale Police Department's budget is 32% of the general fund budget.
3. Does the Swissvale Police Department use training by David Grossman?
  - a. No.
4. What will the consequences be for officers who break rules such as turning off body cameras or using chokeholds?
  - a. Violation of work rules and policies result in discipline as outlined in the answer to question 9
5. Does the Swissvale Police Department have a consent decree?
  - a. No.
6. What is the Swissvale Police Department's rate of closing cases?
  - a. The Swissvale Police Department clearance rate over the past 5 years is 45% of all reported crimes.
7. What assurances do we have that police who are fired won't be rehired, or police that have multiple misconduct records won't be allowed to remain on the force?
  - a. The Swissvale Police Department is not aware of anyone who has ever been rehired after being discharged by Swissvale Borough for misconduct. Multiple instances of misconduct are met with progressive discipline, ultimately resulting in suspension or

discharge. The Civil Service Commission is also able remove a person previously discharged from the list of eligible applicants.

8. Has the department considered using different, unarmed police for traffic to save costs and increase safety?
  - a. Under Pennsylvania state law only police officers are empowered to enforce traffic laws.
  
9. Do the Swissvale police have collective bargaining rights? What effect if any does this have on the inability of the Police Chief to fire officers or reprimand misconduct?
  - a. Discipline decisions are made by the Mayor or Council. The Mayor may suspend up to ten (10) days. Longer suspensions or discharge require an action of Council. An officer may appeal a suspension of more than thirty (30) days or a discharge under the grievance arbitration procedure under the Collective Bargaining Agreement. These appeals are resolved after hearing by a neutral arbitrator selected from a list of arbitrators provided by an outside agency. All disciplinary action of less than thirty days are resolved through the Civil Service Commission, which is independent of Council with separate legal counsel. Civil Service decides the appeal and discipline after a hearing.
  
10. The Swissvale Police Department uses resolve Crisis Services for situations in which a person may be experiencing a mental health crisis. During the last council meeting, the person representing the police said that they use this when resolve is available. Does this mean that resolve sometimes is too busy to respond? Could more funding for resolve help this issue? When resolve is not available, what does SPD do to respond in a safe way for the person experiencing a mental health crisis?
  - a. Resolve Crisis Services contracts with Allegheny County to provide mental health services in Allegheny County. I cannot answer if they need additional funding. Resolve has never refused to come when called to assist Swissvale, but may not be available to respond immediately when needed. The Swissvale Police Department is currently exploring several options for additional social services to assist with mental health calls.