

Present: Supervisor F. Newlin; Councilmen A. Bax; S. Edwards, M. Johnson & E. Palmer; Atty. J. Leone; Dep. Atty. D. Boniello; Police Chief C. Salada; Dep. Clerk C. Schroeder; 1 press (Bflo News)

The Supervisor opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m., the purpose of which was to hear a presentation from the Lewiston Police Department with regard to Police K-9 Services. Newlin introduced Scott Stafford, the town officer in charge of the K-9 Unit and trainer Dave Lepsch.

Lepsch said that it had been voted on to get a service dog that was strictly going to be utilized for narcotics only and that is the type of dog they are looking for at this time. There is an opportunity, he said, to expand on that and bring in a patrol dog. He is here before the Board to present the facts and give the options as to whether or not the Board would like to consider bringing a patrol dog on. There is liability either way, he said. It's important that everyone has a clear understanding of what the liability is and what you are up against as a town and police department as far as consideration for this option. If it's a definitive direction to go with a narcotics dog only, the liability is still there to a certain extent. There will be no additional financial commitment on the town's part to get a patrol dog. It would be inherited in the actual budget that is there now. It would just be a commitment from the department and the officer to be able to take the time and effort to train it. The majority of the K-9 units in the WNY Region are Patrol & Narcotics dogs, he said.

Lepsch said the successful use of a K-9 Unit is recognized worldwide with the major expansion and growth in the field, post 911. The dog and his handler's success to deter and stop crime effectively will be recognized in the community. It will bring a more definitive deterrent to crime and drugs. Both dog and handler are a financial asset to the department and community. Asset forfeiture and monetary forfeiture are almost a sure thing. Narcotics and the criminal element are greatly deterred. Both the Dog & Handler Team would be trained under Police Canine Standards of New York State. The cohesive use of the K-9 Patrol Dog within the community will be recognized and supported by local, national and international agencies.

The K-9 Police Handler Unit can be used in all the following areas of police work: Obedience, Tracking/Search; Building and Open Searches; Article Searches; Handler Protection (Crowd Control); Felony Car Stops and Calls for Assistance.

In closing, Lepsch said that civil liability is at an all time high. Law Enforcement consistently train officers and animals, where applicable, to insure reasonable force is always given the chance. Police departments and municipal governments fear the potential legal action or suit but preventative action is the best defense one can provide.

Newlin noted that the Police Commissioner seriously considered whether or not to get a dog at all. We have been mollified to some degree with whatever concerns we had that this was not going to be a "bite" dog but a "scent" dog. Speaking for myself solely, I'm still of that mindset that I would be much more comfortable with just pursuing a scent dog at this point.

Palmer said he has been involved with dogs for over 10-years with the Niagara Fall Police Department. They have had enormous success with the patrol dog. Two days ago, we had a burglar who was hiding in a house and threatening to harm the officers. When we sent the dog in, he surrendered immediately. That kind of thing goes on all the time. It just makes the police officers that much safer and makes the community safer. Dogs for the purposes of sniffing drugs in the schools are great but they are multi-tasked dogs and can do so much more and they can benefit the community in so many ways. I don't understand why we would even get a dog if it were just for narcotics. It seems like such a wasted opportunity in my opinion.

Lepsch said they are currently looking for a dog that is for narcotics only. If they look for a dog that has patrol capabilities they need to look for a dog that has a foundation for protection. I need to be looking for this dog specifically. The time to change that parameter would be as soon a possible.

Newlin said he would call a meeting with the police commissioners and make a recommendation to the town and village boards by the end of the month.

Lastly, Chief Salada presented the Board with a revision to the town parking ticket. He asked the Board's consideration to increase the fees to match those of the Village. Newlin said they would enact this increase pending advice of counsel.

Transcribed and  
Respectfully submitted by:

Carole N. Schroeder  
Deputy Town Clerk