

**LAKWOOD TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
MINUTES: CORRECTION
OCTOBER 18, 2007**

The following is a correction and addition to the Minutes of the Lakewood Township Committee Meeting held on October 18, 2007.

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The Lakewood Township Committee held a Meeting on Thursday, October 18, 2007 in the Lakewood Municipal Building, at 6:30 PM for the Executive Session and 7:30 PM for the Public Meeting, with the following present:

- Mayor..... Raymond Coles
- Deputy Mayor..... Meir Lichtenstein
- Committee Members..... Senator Robert Singer
Menashe Miller
Charles Cunliffe
- Municipal Manager..... Frank Edwards
- Municipal Attorney..... Steven Secare
- Municipal Clerk..... Bernadette Standowski
- Deputy Clerk..... Mary Ann Del Mastro

PRESENTATIONS: Transportation Board

Mr. Cunliffe asked Mr. Gindoff, Chairman of the Transportation, to introduce the other members of the Transportation Board that were present this evening. Also present: Dave Hibberson and Marlene Atkins.

A brief presentation was given by Bernard Gindoff, Chairman of the Transportation Board, with regard to fatal motor vehicle accidents in Ocean County. The Transportation Board has been discussing this issue for quite some time, and they have recommended that the Township put in action, a task force through the Police Department, which would put vehicles on the road, marked as Task Force. They would like to have the Township inaugurate when it will happen and why, to let the public know what is going on. This will be one part of a complete program they are working on, which is referred to as the three "E's"...education, enforcement and engineering, to see what is going on at certain locations, and why it is happening.

Mayor Coles advised they have discussed this program with the Chief of Police with some of the incidents along New Hampshire Avenue, about doing some type of enhanced enforcement. There is a problem throughout the whole state, not just in Ocean County, and whatever the Police Department can do to try to get a handle on it is something that the entire Committee would like to see, whether it is safety stops, similar to a DWI stop, where they can stop cars to make sure they have their license, registration and insurance, things along those lines, or areas where they are looking for speeding or whatever types of infractions that are going on.

Chief Lawson advised there are several programs in progress. The first, in education, is a program which is County wide, and has been very successful in Freehold. It is called "Alive at 25". They are sending officers for training. The program will be offered at the High School, for not only the students, but also for their parents. The second part, with enforcement, they are partnering with neighboring towns to address severe areas, such Route 70 and New Hampshire Avenue, and Route 9 into Toms River, Jackson, and Howell. These joint programs will provide combined resources to do these programs effectively, and they are going to include Mr. Gindoff in the planning of these programs.

Mayor Coles suggested that maybe they can help out with the educational aspect of it as well.

Senator Singer advised that Marlene Atkins, who serves on the Transportation Board, used to work for the NJ Highway Safety Council, and worked for him for five years on the graduated drivers' license, so she is quite knowledgeable, and helped him get many grants for the area, including Lakewood. The goggles that they got in Lakewood came through her help, through the grant they got for the Police Department, as well as the drunk driving cars.

Senator Singer continued that there are a couple of things that he would ask the Chief to take a look at. In Jackson, because of the recent accidents, they are doing a series of "spot checks" when students leave the parking lot after school, to make sure seat belts are being utilized, and to make sure the individuals in the car are of the proper age in accordance with the graduated drivers' license regulations. A number of summonses have been issued. On a rotating basis, letting the young people know that if they are going to be driving a car they have got to obey the laws, and if not, they are going to be picked up for it. That is one thing that he would like the Chief to speak to Traffic & Safety about.

Senator Singer further advised that he has received many complaints about drivers utilizing hand-held cell phones while driving. It is becoming an acute problem in this community. He feels they need to take a look at this and plan a way to deal with it. He thinks that the first way is saying it is something they are not going to accept. And secondly, issue warnings to people about what can happen, and third, is enforcement. That is just a suggestion. He has asked the Police Commissioner to take a look at it, because it is a growing concern. Any distraction is a distraction, and it is something they should be looking at, and getting ahead of it. He would look for a recommendation from the Police Commissioner and the Chief, as to how they want to deal with it.

Chief Lawson added that Bill was on the Governors desk to make it a primary offense, but he is not sure if it was signed.

Senator Singer stated he thought it was signed; Mr. Secare was not sure. Senator Singer stated they will take a look at it, but if it is not a primary offense, they can not do it. But they can still let people know it is a distraction. He would still like to get ahead of the issue with the young people; it is really a good sense of awareness to them.

Chief Lawson added that he believes in Freehold, students could not bring their cars onto school property unless they had completed the "Alive at 25" program, so it was a very strong incentive for them to participate. But absolutely, they can do spot checks.

Mr. Cunliffe stated that several years ago, when it was his last time as Mayor, he had asked the Committee and former Directors to consider, and possibly it was because of budgetary reasons it never happened, was to hire more Police Officers specifically so they could increase the ranks of Traffic & Safety so that they could use them as a platoon where they could go out and do enforcement in all of the problem areas. He asked Chief Lawson if they had a computer analysis and map of the town showing where the hot spots are, as far as serious and fatal accidents, both pedestrian and vehicle.

Chief Lawson answered they could certainly make that up.

Mr. Cunliffe continued that was something they were supposed to get into it, and there was talk about getting the extra software they would need. He would hope this could be resurrected, so they could look at parts of town where there are traffic accidents. If it is beyond the budgetary capability of the township, because of financial constraints, is there a possibility to have some type of a County wide system set up, where two officers from Lakewood, two officers from Jackson, two from Toms River, two from Manchester, can be put onto a County task force so that the financial burden is not too much on each individual town, and they would rotate through the County as needed to go after specific areas.

Chief Lawson answered it certainly could. And they do have the capability of analyzing the most serious intersections where accidents are occurring; they can identify those. At the next County meeting, he will speak with the Traffic officers and bring that up, and see if the other towns are willing to do it.

Mr. Cunliffe continued that they have a wonderful resource in Marlene, and he wonders if the Committee, the Police Commissioner, and Chief of Police, could meet with her. He asked Mr. Secare if it would be possible for them to explore the possibility of using Marlene as an outside contractor, to help the Police Department do all of the paper work that she is so familiar with, to get grant money for specific Traffic & Safety and DOT things.

Mr. Secare answered that it should be referred to the Manager; there is nothing legally wrong with it, but he does not know if the budget would permit it at this point.

Mr. Cunliffe asked if it was something they could consider.

The Committee members were in agreement that they could certainly consider it.

Mayor Coles asked Marlene Atkins if it would be something she would consider.

(Unable to hear response from the audience.)

Senator Singer added that it is certainly a great idea, but he suggested they keep in mind, if you take a look at the amount of officers.... a lot of the other towns have not hired through the years... they are between what they loaned to the County for the Prosecutors Office.....

Mr. Cunliffe stated that is his fear; they have been talking about this for a long time at the Transportation Board Meetings. For several years, people have come to the meetings and reported their concerns. He asked Chief Lawson if there was any possibility of this happening, with their current manpower.

Chief Lawson stated it is possible. You just have to make it a priority. Obviously crime issues tend to be put up higher in priority. But you have to do what you can. Maybe not two officers, maybe the town can send one officer, and maybe you can have a dozen officers to do a task force.

Mr. Cunliffe commented that people, as a society, if you are talking about a terrorist event, or about war, or about a homicide, people are horrified about death of innocent people. But people are betting massacred on the roads, and that does not upset people as much. He believes they need to refocus. Crime is important, but every life they loose on the road, is just as important. If there is some way that they can work together, whether it is through the County, or through their own manpower, to try to have some type of task force.

Chief Lawson stated it was his intention to add an officer to Traffic & Safety shortly, so even if they can not do it outside, he thinks they could do something internally.