

Belle Boro swears in officer

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Local news

Oct 9, 2024

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PHOTO PROVIDED Mayor Gene "Buddy" Johnson swears in new Bellefonte Police Officer Noah Bollman at Tuesday evening's Borough Council meeting.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Mayor Johnson, left, poses beside Officer Noah Bollman, center, holding his new badge and Bellefonte Police Chief William Witmer.

BELLEFONTE — Changes continue at the Bellefonte Police Department as the borough reviews renovation bids for their new station and a new officer joins the force, marking further shifts in a department that has seen significant transformations in recent months.

Officer Noah Bollman was sworn in Tuesday evening at the Bellefonte Borough Council meeting by Mayor Gene “Buddy” Johnson and presented his badge by Chief William Witmer.

Officer Bollman is a five year veteran police officer who previously served with the Altoona Police Department.

A former resident of Bellefonte, Bollman earned his associates degree in criminal justice from Penn State and completed the Act 120 Municipal Police Academy program mandated by the Municipal Police Officers’ Education and Training Commission (MPOETC) at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

“Over the past five years, he’s gained a vast knowledge and experience in police work... not to mention that he is a field training officer for (Altoona’s police) department,” said Chief Witmer.

“We are excited to have him join us. I believe he is going to be a great asset to our department.”

Witmer was appointed chief of police in September, after serving several months as acting chief, following the abrupt departure of Bellefonte Borough Police Chief Shawn Weaver in March.

The department is rebuilding its force after 40 percent of the patrol unit’s officers left in the early months of 2024. In May, Officers Andrew Hurd and Lisa Larken were sworn in to fill the vacancies left by former officers Matthew Pollock and Jason Brower, both of whom departed under unusual circumstances.

At the meeting, council presented bids for renovations to the first floor of the original Bellefonte Armory at 301 N. Spring St., their new headquarters, steps from their current location inside the Bellefonte Municipal Building.

Ralph Stewart said the bids they received for general contracting, as well as mechanical, plumbing and electrical work, would be reviewed by the project’s architect to ensure the packages are complete and to assist in selecting the best fit, in consultation with borough staff. Four firms submitted bids to serve as general contractor. Midstate Construction submitted a bid of \$123,835, followed by TMG Builders of Bellefonte at \$128,875. JC Orr & Son offered a bid of \$135,235, and SF Construction submitted the highest bid at \$211,362.

For mechanical and plumbing, KNK Plumbing submitted a bid of \$101,642. PBCI Allen offered \$82,600, and Silver Tip Inc. came in with a bid of \$82,900.

For electrical work, Stelco Inc. submitted a bid of \$41,455, while Strouse Electric offered \$22,235. TMG Builders bid \$64,845 and Westmoreland Electrical Services submitted \$25,400.

Additionally, Council agreed to consider Bellefonte Emergency Medical Services’ formal request for 1/2 a mill of funding in the Borough’s 2025 Budget at a future meeting.

The request would provide Bellefonte EMS \$51,055 in financial support based on current assessment values.

The rise in millage would cost residents \$8.36 per person or \$17.84 per household annually, which equates to \$0.05 per day.

“That expenditure is a minimal price for an essential emergency service to the community,” wrote Bellefonte EMS Chief Scott Rhoat in a letter to borough council asking for the millage increase.

“Municipal funding support is directed towards vehicle/equipment replacement and updates in addition to supporting increases towards a living wage for our staff, which currently starts at only \$14/hr.” he said. “Your continued support is needed so that we can provide reliable emergency response to the residents and businesses of your community into the future.”