

Witmer Sworn In as Bellefonte Police Chief

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After serving as **acting police chief of the Bellefonte Police Department for the past eight months**, Bill Witmer was formally appointed to the position on a permanent basis on Monday.

Witmer was sworn in by Mayor Gene “Buddy” Johnson and District Judge Kelley Gillette-Walker after Bellefonte Borough Council unanimously approved his appointment as police chief during its regular meeting. Council authorized offering the position to Witmer in September and extended the offer letter in November.

A Bellefonte native and law enforcement veteran of two decades, Witmer joined the borough’s police department in 2016. He was a detective before taking on the acting chief role in April.

“I was blessed to have Bill in class and he was a very reputable individual,” Johnson, a Bellefonte School District teacher, said. “He was a great athlete and great person, and I am extremely proud to have him be the quarterback of our police force here.”

Witmer was tapped to lead the department following the abrupt resignation of Shawn Weaver, who led the department for 18 years, on April 1. Weaver’s departure came after the resignations of two Bellefonte officers. Reasons for the resignations have not been publicly disclosed.

On Monday, Witmer harkened back to the night in April when he was introduced as acting chief.

“I made two statements that night for the first time I stood up to address you,” he said. “One, we were gonna move forward from that point on. I think we did that. The second one, I told you I was going to be sure we maintained and sustained a high level of police service in the Borough of Bellefonte. I think we did that as well.

“To accomplish that I had to have a supporting cast who’s here tonight: the men and women of the Bellefonte police department. We need to give them a hand as well because they had a big part in this to get us headed in the right direction. They stood behind me, supported me, believed in my leadership and that’s why we’re here today. I’m truly honored.”

Witmer also thanked his family, as well as borough leadership for their support over the past eight months.

“[It] made my job a lot easier,” he said. “You were very accommodating and I appreciate that.”

Since Witmer took on the leadership position in April, the department has stabilized, hiring two full-time officers to help rebuild a force that had been depleted by the resignations and a retirement earlier in the year. The department currently has eight full-time officers in addition to Witmer.