

Harveys Lake council mulls merging or eliminating police department

By ERIC FOSTER
Post Staff

Amid trying times for the Harveys Lake Police Department, at the borough council's meeting July 21 a borough councilman suggested that the borough consider combining their police force with neighboring municipalities, or abandon it altogether and let state police patrol instead.

The borough's assistant police chief, Ronald Spock has been charged with bribery and a part-time officer resigned in June after less than three months on the job.

"We have such a hard-time trying to get part-time police. Maybe we should look into consolidating police with other borough's and townships," suggested councilman Thomas Kehler. "Or maybe we should look into having the state police patrol. It's not like we have many problems."

Mayor Joseph Boyle said both suggestions have their pitfalls.

"There has been a lot of talk about a unified police force. But there are a lot of bugs to be worked out," said Boyle. "State police, they have minimum staffing now."

Earlier in the meeting, the council accepted the resignation, effective June 18, of Russell Devens, who was hired in April. Devens cited personal conflicts with department regulations, and lack of adequate equipment and backup as reasons for the resignation.

As a replacement, the council hired Ed Dubiac as a part-time police officer for a one-year probationary period at an hourly wage of \$7.

Councilman Edward Kelly, who heads the borough's police committee, said that two more part-time officers are in the process of

being hired.

The council also voted to require all of the borough's police officers undergo physical and psychological testing even though state law only requires newly-hired officers to be tested.

J.R. Davis Fire Company recognized

In a split vote, the council voted to recognize the J.R. Davis Volunteer Fire Company of Idetown in the borough.

Councilman David Abod expressed concern that by recognizing the J.R. Davis Fire Company, some borough funding now allocated to the borough's D.C. Roberts Fire Company, would go to the J.R. Davis Fire Company.

Council president Boice said that funding would not be affected, but by recognizing J.R. Davis, which is just over the borough line in Lehman Township, the company would now be called by dispatchers if there was a fire nearby.

Kehler, Boice, Martin Noon and Joseph Miscavage voted to recognize the company, while Abod, Kelly, and William Wilson abstained from the vote.

In other business

- Councilman Kehler announced that recyclable items haven't been picked up in the last several weeks because the recycling truck has been broken down.

- Councilman William Wilson announced that guardrails will be installed on Ridge Street and Firehouse Road.

- Council voted to have signs installed on Hillside Avenue saying that parking is prohibited from noon to 5 p.m. The signs are necessary because the mailman cannot get to mailboxes, accord-

ing to councilman Kehler.

The council also authorized borough solicitor Charles McCormick to proceed with legal action against the Lakeview Terrace Beach Association for not hooking up to the sewer system.

Problems with planting

Mrs. Carol Arnold complained to the borough council July 21 that a neighbor keeps digging up flowers she's planting along the road near her home. The council gave Mrs. Arnold permission last year to plant flowers in the borough's right-of-way along Firehouse Road.

Arnold reported that the neighbor persists in pulling up the flowers in front of his barn, across the street from his home.

Councilman David Abod said he believed that barn is in the borough's right-of-way.

Solicitor McCormick suggested to council president Richard Boice that the neighbor be sent a letter stating that if he keeps pulling up the plants, the borough engineer will be sent to survey the area to find out where his barn is in relation to the borough's right of way.

Grants for home repair still available

A grant for low-income Harveys Lake home-owners to help pay for essential work on their homes is still available, according to councilman David Abod.

The grant would come from the Luzerne County Office of Community Development, and would pay up to \$7,500 for work such as insulation, storm windows, or water heaters.

Anyone interested in the grant should call the borough office at 639-2113 or Abod at home.

Bribery charge

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help get the drunk driving charge dropped.

Kline testified that he visited Spock at his home.

"I explained that Pete has an inspection business and a dealer's license and has a lot to lose," said Kline at the hearing. "I asked if there was anything he could do for the police department. He thought about it and said the TV in the police station is on the blink and they could use a new one."

State police and the District Attorney's Office learned of the alleged bribery when two Harveys Lake Patrolmen, Jeffrey Butler and Mark Karlonis, told police chief Lionel Bulford that the television set in the police department's office may have been a bribe.

Butler testified at the hearing,

recalling that in December he went to the police station and remarked on the new television.

"He (Spock) said yeah, remember the DUI the other night, that's where the TV came from," said Butler.

While acknowledging that Spock's comment may have been stupid,

Spock's attorney, Jonathan Blum, argued that the bribery charge should be dropped because Spock decided to drop the drunken driving charge before the television set was offered. Blum offered a state Supreme Court case dealing with admissions to a college to support the argument.

"Many times things are donated to police departments," said Blum. "I believe that he agreed to drop the

charge before anything was offered.

Assistant district attorney Charles Coslett argued that given that fact that a no drunken driving charge was filed in an instance where the driver should have automatically lost their license, enough evidence had been presented to send the charge to county court.

After considering Blum's argument overnight, Maffei agreed with the prosecution and sent the charge to county court.

Achey and Kline have not been charged in the case.

Harveys Lake Borough Council has suspended Spock with pay from his position. If convicted, Spock could face a maximum of seven years in prison and fines of up to \$15,000. Spock is free on \$10,000 bail.

Pension

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- In 1991 the plan used excess state aid totaling \$991 to offset pension costs in other years. They recommended that this excess amount be returned to the Commonwealth because state aid should be used on an annual basis.

- State aid allocated to the plan and municipal contributions made to the plan exceeded the required five percent of the participants' payroll.

Auditors recommended that the township withdraw the excess contributions and interest, and that in the future municipal officials make sure that they deposit the correct amount.

- The plan's financial statements prepared by the municipality were inadequate because they did not include the additional information needed in assessing the plan's present and future ability to pay benefits when due.

Auditors recommended that municipal officials include this information when preparing financial statements.

- Two township supervisors, roadmaster Frank Wagner and

laborer Phil Walter, were inappropriately participating in the plan.

Auditors recommended that the township's board of auditors approve the supervisors' participation in the pension plan, as required by state law.

- Township officials failed to formally appoint a chief administrative officer of the pension plan, which could result in important filing deadlines being overlooked, state aid being adversely affected and or delayed, and investment opportunities being lost.

- Funding requirements for the

plan were improperly submitted in the township's budgets for 1990 and 1991, as required by state law.

- The township did not deposit its 1990 state aid within 30 days of its receipt, as required by state law, losing interest.

"We made a mistake. The check wasn't deposited for nine months, but there was no harm done," said township solicitor Frank Townend.

Auditors recommended that the municipality repay the interest that was lost and deposit state aid into the pension plan promptly.

3,200 miles

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"Just as we decided that things couldn't get any worse, they would," she laughed. "Either the wind would come up or we would encounter storms. We joked through the entire ride about being thankful that at least we hadn't had a lava flow that day."

Riding thousands of miles takes its toll on bicycles as well. Holmes felt lucky to have had only four flat tires between Los Angeles and New Mexico, where she purchased top-grade replacements which lasted the remainder of the trip.

"We had a flat tire contest — only two riders made it through the entire trip without any flats," said Ms. Holmes. "One poor guy went through 26 tires."

The challenges of weather, breakdowns and flats were offset by intimate glimpses of nature, people and scenes of American life.

Along the way, Holmes saw her first roadrunner scurrying through the desert alongside the road, taking off in front of the bicyclists. Occasionally rattlesnakes or lizards slithered off the road into the desert as the bicycles approached. She described running into desert dust devils, mini-tornadoes which could zip across the road, momentarily engulfing riders. "I saw my brother's bike suddenly wobble as a dust devil caught him," she said.

"Then it was my turn — a sharp tilt left, then right — then I was through it and regained my balance."

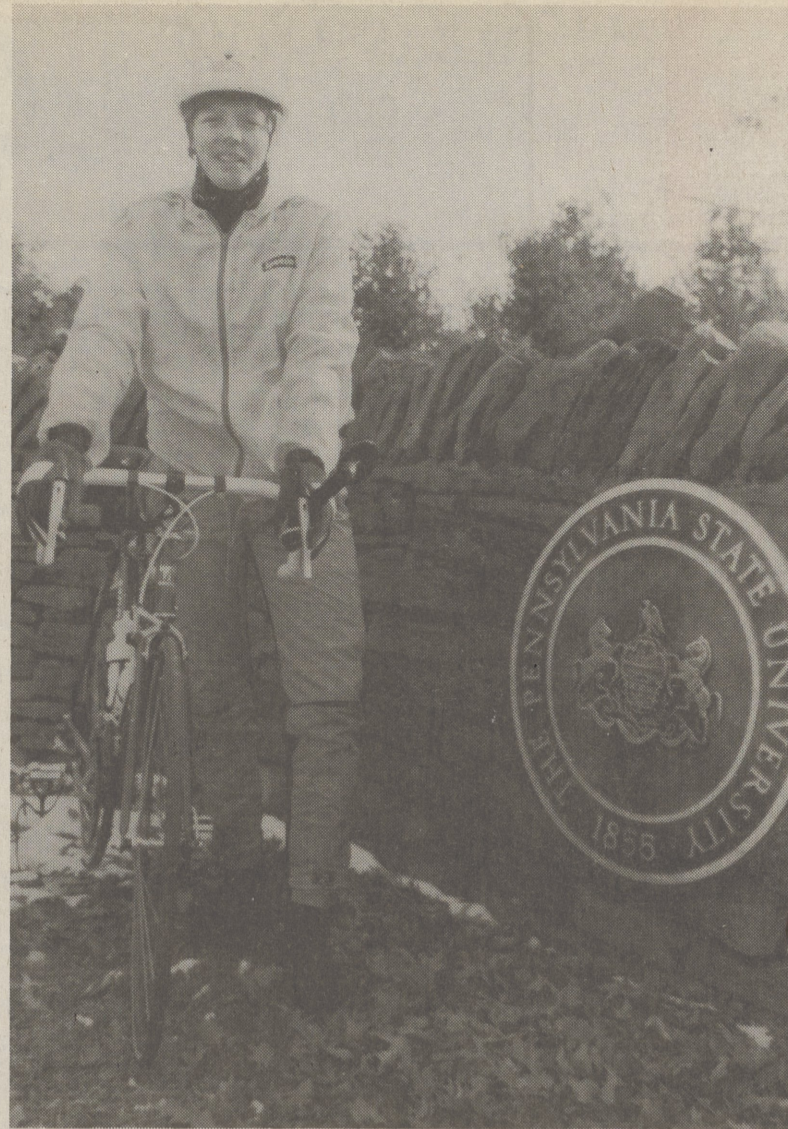
While pedaling through New Mexico she visited the ancient ruins of a Pecos Indian village, taking home a memento, an authentic Native American dreamcatcher, a small weblike hanging designed to catch good dreams, made by a friend who lives in Albuquerque.

People along the way flagged down the cyclists, asking about the ride's purpose and often becoming intrigued that more than 60 people were riding for charities.

Some made individual donations to riders for their charities, helped out with repairs or treated the riders to a meal.

Near the end of the trip, two boys living outside of Erie set up a stand to serve iced tea to the thirsty riders.

"The people whom we met along the way were wonderful. I don't have all their names, but I'll never forget their faces," she said.



ANNE HOLMES

Holmes was surprised that many communities which she pedaled through do not have recycling programs; some people didn't seem to know what the term meant.

Although she tried to save her aluminum cans to drop off in communities that recycled, occasionally she resorted to leaving a bag of cans alongside a trash barrel for someone who might be recycling on their own.

"My experience with recycling soft drink cans on the trip has made me very proud of the Back Mountain's recycling program," she said.

Besides getting an up-close glimpse of America, the cross-country trip taught Holmes a few things about herself.

"I learned to ask for help," she said. "Although I try to be independent, some days I doubted that I could finish that day's ride, particularly through the rough weather. And I learned that I'm a lot tougher than I thought I was."

"I gained mental strength throughout the trip. And our camaraderie taught me to empathize with people having difficulty," said Holmes. "For ex-

ample two riders had to leave the trip because of physical problems. It must have been terribly difficult for them to be forced to quit in the middle of a project that they had their hearts set on completing."

Holmes' co-workers from Penn State-Lehman campus, where she teaches health and physical education, helped her out in many ways, from contributing to funding for the trip to making sure that she had mail waiting for her at many stops along the way.

"Thanks to my Penn State friends, I got the most mail of any rider on the trip."

The Back Mountain community's generosity included strangers who made generous donations and a local merchant who arranged for Holmes' bike to be shipped by United Parcel Service to Los Angeles.

"Bicycling across the country was the realization of a dream for me," said Holmes. "I'm thrilled to have helped to raise funds for Habitat for Humanity, and I am very proud to have represented the people of the Back Mountain in this effort."

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