

Township Signs Five-Year Lease For PTPD

BY DAYNA M. REIDENOUER

The Pequea Township Police Department (PTPD) will soon have a new home. Pequea Township supervisors recently signed a lease for the banquet hall of the New Danville Fire Company (NDFC), 43 Marticville Road, Lancaster. The lease will take effect on Tuesday, Dec. 1, and the PTPD plans to be fully operational in the new space by Friday, Jan. 1, 2021.

The PTPD has occupied the meeting room of the Pequea Township municipal building, 1026 Millwood Road, Willow Street, since Jan. 1, 2019. Previously, it had been part of the Southern Regional Police Department, which operated a station in Conestoga. "Our occupancy caused the township to have their meetings elsewhere," PTPD Chief John Michener said.

At more than 3,500 square feet, the NDFC's banquet hall will give the PTPD more than double the space it currently has. The fire department has approved of the police department adding some interior walls to break up the space. Michener has made a list of priorities for the new station. Among

them are adding an actual holding cell, a specific interview room with recording capabilities, a secure space for storing material records, and enhanced security.

"It's important to cordon some of these things off," Michener explained. He noted that the Conestoga police station had a holding cell manufactured by local company Steel Fab Enterprises and expressed a desire to acquire one for the new station. Currently, the department restrains individuals on a reinforced bench reminiscent of a church pew.

Michener reported township supervisor Harry Lehman as saying that the board of supervisors voted unanimously to sign the lease and a new five-year contract with the PTPD and the chief.

"The township board sees this as a positive move for township residents," Michener said. "The board is excited to work together with us and the fire department to make this happen."

NDFC president Ken Stauffer noted that the duration of the lease is five years "to see how it goes." Having a permanent resident should not impact the fire company except to provide a consistent income for



New Danville Fire Company president Ken Stauffer (left) and Pequea Township Police Department Chief John Michener announce the police department's move.

the nonprofit organization. The first responders' respective vehicles will use separate entrances as well, although Michener said that PTPD officers are rarely in the building, as they use their patrol cars as mobile offices.

"We have a good relationship (with the NDFC) already, but I

think this makes it easier to enhance public safety in the township when we're operating closely together all the time," Michener remarked.

"It's nice to have the emergency services in one location and visible," Stauffer added, noting that Marticville Road is the well-traveled

Route 741.

Fire services for Pequea Township are provided by NDFC and the West Willow Fire Company. The supervisors also considered renting space from West Willow. PTPD employs four full-time officers, including Michener, and four part-time officers.

Pequea Township will pay a

monthly fee to the NDFC for use of the space, but the lease will include the cost of utilities. Additionally, there will be some up-front costs to facilitate the move, and Michener said that a fund drive is being considered to offset the cost. A donation fund to support the PTPD already exists, and Michener hopes community members will be in charge of fundraising. He expressed concern for the ethical implications of asking police officers to raise money for the department. "We will be reaching out to residents to hopefully help us out with that," Michener said, adding that skilled labor may also be requested to set up the new space. "We certainly have a township full of knowledgeable and able people in construction. I want to do this right - to take advantage of the space and set it up correctly the first time."

Opportunities to contribute to the move will be posted at www.pequeatownshippd.org. For more information, readers may contact Michener at 717-945-7546 or Michenerj@pequeatownshippd.org.