

PROTECTION COMMITTEE, 26 AUGUST

The Protection Committee met on 26 August to discuss the situation with the Hallowell Police Department. This included some questions as well as ideas about how to improve the situation. The issues discussed were:

1) Coverage plans with only two officers

Please provide an assessment of how two officers will provide coverage in the city. This could include limiting coverage at certain times of the day, limiting coverage for things like speed enforcement or other minor routine issues.

2) Back up coverage by Sheriff's Department and State Police

How will back up coverage be provided by the Sheriff's Department and State Police and any costs for this back up coverage

3) Potential to open up union contract to increase officer pay

We discussed the pay differential between Hallowell Police Department and other area law enforcement agencies and how this has made recruitment of new officers difficult. One idea that we discussed was opening up the union contract to increase the base pay of police officers to be regionally competitive. This would obviously require concurrence by the Granite City Employees Association, which could become bogged down in other issues.

From the perspective of budgetary impacts, the thought is to use salary savings from the vacant positions to fund increases in pay. Recognizing that this will take time, this could be bridge strategy to get us to the next budget year discussions.

4) Potential for merging Hallowell Police Department with Gardiner Police Department or Augusta Police Department.

Would there be savings and operational efficiencies with HPD merging with the Gardiner or Augusta PDs? Clearly, there are many issues folded into this conversation but the idea may have merit as we look to the future.

5) Rehab of HPD space

Given the current budget situation, we discussed the idea of moving the PD out of the current space and rehabbing the space with ceramic floors, painting and repairs, and putting in an air exchange system to improve air quality. Both the City Hall Auditorium and Hallowell Fire Department spaces were suggested as temporary HPD locations. Among the questions raised are how long it would take to get the work done, could public works staff do the work, and an estimated cost of the work. Clearly, funding is an issue and we discussed using TIF funds for this work.