

Joint Statement on Hellertown – Lower Saucon Regional Police Study

January 2013

In July 2011, the Councils from Hellertown Borough and Lower Saucon Township jointly agreed to participate in a regional police study and submitted a formal request for the study to the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). The following month in August 2011, the municipalities were notified that DCED Governor's Center for Local Government Services had agreed to conduct a Regional Police Study through their Police Peer Management Program.

In November 2011, a kick-off meeting with Borough and Township representatives, and the DCED assigned peer consultant, retired Towamencin Township Police Chief Joseph Kirschner, was held to review the outline and scope of the police study. Chief Kirschner advised the group that the study would take 4-6 months to complete and would look at the feasibility of consolidating the Borough and Township Police Departments.

On May 23, 2012, the draft Hellertown – Lower Saucon Regional Police Study was presented to municipal officials and to the public at a meeting held at the Saucon Valley School District. The draft report was posted on the Borough website at: <http://hellertownborough.org/5242012regpolicestudy.pdf> and on the Township website at: www.lowersaucontownship.org/svp/regional.pdf for public review and comment.

For the past several months, representatives from the Councils, police departments and administrative staffs have been reviewing the draft report and meeting to discuss and exchange information on the impacts that the proposed consolidated police department would have on municipal budgets and current police services.

It was the consensus conclusion from these reviews that:

- The true costs of the proposed consolidated police department were understated in terms of the part-time coverage that would be needed, employee benefits, and other operational costs were the two departments merged together.
- That the potential savings from merging the two departments is not sufficient enough at this time to warrant a consolidation.
- The two Police Chiefs proposed to explore the use of mutual aid agreements, joint operations, training, purchasing, etc., to maximize savings and coverage for the two communities.

Based on this review and analysis, the study group recommends that the Hellertown Borough and the Lower Saucon Township Councils take no further action on the report, and that the municipalities notify the DCED Governor's Center of this decision and thank them for their recommendations and assistance.