

Chris-

I'm happy to have you share this with the Council. I don't think that there is anything here that I wouldn't have said at a public meeting (and probably did, for those who watched). All I would ask is that, if you share the email, that you copy me in case folks have questions. I want them to know that I'm happy to be helpful to any member of the Council in any way I can. I genuinely appreciate your reaching out.

I hadn't thought about how new law enforcement rules would filter down to small departments. It is remarkable but perhaps not surprising to think that needed rules and mandates aimed at addressing very real police abuses at large departments serve to close small departments and concentrate the authority of those larger troubled agencies, like PGPD.

Best,
Cheye

On Fri, Jun 3, 2022 at 10:39 AM Chris Brittan-Powell <cbritpow@gmail.com> wrote:

Thanks so much Cheye. This is great information and really gives context to so much.

I know that the whole council could benefit from knowing this knowledge. While I promise that it would in no way be for public consumption, I would appreciate if you might permit the other current council members to read it. I am certain that they would appreciate it.

The current legal and procedural changes made with respect to law enforcement have real financial, let alone enforcement, impacts. These look to be extremely costly and likely to result in the closing of many small municipality's PDs. As you may recall, I come from a law enforcement family. They are speaking to the severe long term impacts the communities like BH look to facing. It will be a tough balance.

Again, many thanks.

Chris

On Fri, Jun 3, 2022 at 12:56 PM Cheye Calvo <cheyecalvo@gmail.com> wrote:

Chris-

Apologies for the delayed response. I understand that there was a plan to expand and renovate the Town Office and add a police station on the second floor after my departure. I believe it was part of the bond issue that Lynn White thwarted when she wouldn't sign the documents and the whole thing fell apart. I do not know the details.

Although this was something that came up periodically during my tenure, it was never a priority or a serious consideration. I will take the two issues separately starting with the police department. When I was first elected, BHPD was jammed into a really small space at 5411 Berwyn Road (where I assume it remains). As we grew the department from six to eight f/t officers, we were able to expand the office space to an adjacent suite and effectively double the size of the office. This allows us to create a new bullpen, add a detective office, and create an interview room. It honestly gave us everything that we needed -- and it was super cheap. I recall that the rent was something like \$1,500 per month, which is a fraction of what we would pay for any meaningful renovation or to build new, even on land that we already owned. Moreover, the building down there had lots of available parking, which matters because the police need 10-12 dedicated spaces, something that would create a real problem at the Town Center. Finally, there is some advantage in having the police in commercial rather than residential setting, as its interactions with folks were not always easy and mixing with the Town Center could have issues.

From time to time, we did consider buying one of the historic homes in town and moving in the BHPD as a means of making use of the space. I especially would have loved the bluish historic home at the corner of Ruatan and 58th, but this never happened. It was my opinion that, so long as the rent at its current location was so remarkably cheap, it would not be cost effective to move them. Certainly, there were better uses for capital investment.

As for the Town Offices, how to make better use of space was a constant consideration. The priority for my first few terms was creating systems to manage capital purchases and paying off our debt. By 2010, we had set up reserve accounts to pay cash for all replacement vehicles on a regular program (vehicle replacement reserve fund) and paid off all outstanding debt, most notably a mid-1990s street bond. We also began the practice of dedicating 100% of Highway User Revenues into an infrastructure reserve. These were critical developments that prepared us for the every-three year property reassessment in 2010, when the town's tax-base took a massive hit (something like 25%). At this time, the priority shift from going debt free and managing capital purchases to infrastructure. That was when we passed the dedicated property tax for infrastructure, which we put into the dedicated reserve, and began to receive money from the Greenbelt Station deal, which started slow but ultimately would total \$1 million (yes, that got its own reserve, too; I love reserves). This paid for the first sidewalk project, which was much more expensive than I originally envisioned. My goal was to develop a comprehensive plan to repave every street every 15 years and slowly add sidewalks.

The Town Center was a backdrop to this conversation. Space was always at a premium, and we made lots of little improvements that made a big difference. First, we gave the front room when you enter to code, which has been stuffed uncomfortably into the back. We moved the Council Office to the back corner, which had been the media room (which was a Dahai thing). We converted a storage area next to the TA office to the Clerk's office. We then cleared out a bunch of boxes to house a desk in the other backroom (with the door), which had been storage. We also got new furniture to make the office proper more efficient. All said, we made meaningful progress with the space that we had. We then turned our sights to the Town Center, cleaning out the former library and making it a meeting space for town orgs and the like. We finally redesigned the Council Chamber, which was a creative use of cable money. I think more was possible, but it was harder than I thought it would be, but we definitely improved the use. The question of whether we should do something bigger always came up. Generally speaking, I prioritized capital investment on public amenities -- roads, parks, and services -- over town offices. I was interested in how to make the best use of the Town Center and sometimes wondered about the right mix of space as our population changed, for instance when the bulk of seniors that defined that era moved on, would the town want to give more space to youth, etc. We spent more time on the upstairs of the Town Center, making the stairs more accessible and investing in various things (it is unbelievable how much the elevator costs). I was always open to some grand effort that was part of a one-time use of capital, and clearly that was the thinking of the Council after I left, but I wasn't part of that.

A final point. There is no question that the move to go debt free and reserve for capital was mine, and I consider it a major accomplishment. I am very proud that during my tenure that the town's net worth quadrupled. However, I was never anti-debt as an ideology. To me, the goal was to provide quality services at the best price. The question of debt was whether it would help the town maximize its economy of scale while ensuring long-term, comprehensive maintenance. Lynn White cited the debt-free status as an argument against signing the bond deal. I always felt this was a misuse of what we were trying to do. I can't speak to the specifics, but I always thought that the town would acquire debt at low interest rates to finance a comprehensive street maintenance program. Such a project likely would be the right town to leverage the project to do other things, too. The devil would be in the details. However, it wasn't about opposition to debt. When I got there, the town was using stupid debt and tying its hands for short-term and inefficient ends. I got rid of that. The Town of Colmar Manor built a ridiculous rec center that saddles them in debt -- and with it has the highest tax rate of any municipality in the county. Debt can be a curse for generations. However, as part of a sound plan, it can be a means to pay for something that makes long-term economic sense.

Hope these ramblings are helpful. Good luck and thank you for your service!

Best,
Cheye

On Wed, Jun 1, 2022 at 9:29 AM Chris Brittan-Powell <cbritpow@gmail.com> wrote:

Please add any plans you may have developed to build a police department building.
Thanks again
Chris

On Wed, Jun 1, 2022 at 12:27 PM Chris Brittan-Powell <cbritpow@gmail.com> wrote:

OK Cheye, let me take advantage of your good will toward BH.
At some point in your tenure as mayor did you all evaluate/ explore plans for expanding the town hall? I think it happened but don't remember when.
Thanks in advance.
Chris