

Good morning. My name is Scott Martin.

As a Lancaster County Commissioner, I experience first-hand the important role public safety plays in the lives of those who reside and visit Lancaster County. My job requires that I meet regularly with Lancaster County Police Chiefs, Fire Chiefs and EMS Managers. I am also a member of Lancaster County's Public Safety Communications Committee. In addition, I spent many years working with various members of the public safety community through my time in the juvenile justice system. I come from a long family history of law enforcement professionals, including my father who spent 15 years as a municipal police officer at East Hempfield Township, and another 15 years as a special agent for the Office of Attorney General. I currently sit on PCCD's Criminal Justice Advisory Committee and Chair CCAP's Criminal Justice System Best Practices Committee. When it comes to public safety, I understand their operations, and I understand the part they play in this county.

The proposed troop realignment of State Police will mean closing the Ephrata station, as well as the loss of the Lancaster station as a headquarters. In the proposed scenario, departmental oversight will originate from Troop L in Reading. While I understand the need for fiscal responsibility, the difference in population between Berks and Lancaster counties alone adds to my concern over this move. Lancaster County has over 100,000 more people than does Berks County.

Population aside, the proposed realignment would mean a number of important specialized services would no longer be based at the Lancaster station. They would be moved to Reading, or Philadelphia. I believe some of those services include fire investigations, accident reconstruction, maintenance technicians, drug investigations, polygraph services, and forensic services.

I'll take a few moments to discuss the impact of moving a few of these services out of Lancaster County.

Fire Investigations – Other than Lancaster City, the PSP Fire Marshals are the main fire investigators in Lancaster County. Lancaster City maintains their own fire investigators. Should Troop J be stripped of its fire investigators, the response time to the scene of a fire would be greatly increased. Consider the possibility of a PSP Fire Marshal responding from Frackville (in Schuylkill County) to Fulton Township. Given certain times of the day, that response could take hours. You must consider the fact that the vast majority of the fire service in Lancaster County is made-up of volunteers. They give-up paid work time, and their free time, to serve. We could reach a point where the volunteers no longer remain at the scene of an extinguished fire given the unreasonable estimated time of arrival from a PSP fire marshal. This may result in evidentiary concerns, as well. Finally, Lancaster County's current PSP Fire Marshals have an established rapport with our fire service. Since Reading's Troop K already has Fire Marshals, would we lose our experienced investigators?

Accident Reconstruction - Although Lancaster County has some active municipal teams to handle their areas, the PSP handle a large geographic area that includes Route 30, Route 222 south of Lancaster City, Route 472, Route 372, and Route 41, among others. When a serious accident occurs these roads are closed and detours are put in place. Added time for responders from Reading, or beyond, just means that roads stay closed longer. Again, this will impact the volunteers, such as Fire Police, who must maintain these traffic control points for extended times.

Maintenance Technicians - Lancaster PSP employs two maintenance technicians to maintain PSP vehicles. Additionally, these technicians are qualified to inspect vehicles involved in accidents. So, should someone say their brakes failed, these technicians can inspect the car. Municipal departments have utilized them on a number of occasions. If these technicians will be relocated, municipal departments will have to rely on local auto dealers to get this done. Undoubtedly, this will mean the local auto dealer technician will get involved in court proceedings. Will local auto dealers provide staff to do this work if productivity is lost further down the line?

Dispatching- Their current dispatch center had multiple individuals working and could answer multiple 9-1-1 calls that we transferred. Unfortunately it sounds like the barracks will go back to that single dispatcher on duty scenario that we dealt with years ago. Meaning, when we have an influx of calls for PSP and transfer them, no one answers and we end up taking the call. Thus, we are impacted by doing their workload because they just don't have enough personnel to cover it.

Also, we are hearing that Elizabeth Twp. might be covered by the Jonestown Barracks, Brecknock and Caernarvon Twps. covered by Reading barracks and the rest of Lancaster County covered by the Lancaster Barracks. We're not sure what that all means. Will we have to deal with three "dispatch centers"? This can obviously lead to confusion and delay; something that is connected to response times, which is critical to public safety.

Response – If the realignment occurs, troopers will remain at the Lancaster station while ancillary personnel are moved. This means that a high profile incident will only have the troopers on the street responding to it. During the Nickel Mines incident, all available ancillary personnel responded from Troop J. This included Fire Marshals, Forensics, etc. The response was incredible and PSP did a fabulous job. What happens when all these ancillary positions get moved? A serious incident might only have one or two troopers there for a long period of time. Additionally, for over 30 years, Lancaster County has enjoyed the privilege of being able to talk directly to PSP. In fact, PSP has always been allowed to program Lancaster County's frequencies into their radios. Will realignment disrupt this important capability?

I hope that the concerns I have provided are given consideration in the realignment decision-making process. I feel our population base and the call volume generated through our 9-1-1 center warrants maintaining Troop J in its current form.

In closing, I commend Commissioner Noonan for trying to be as efficient and effective as possible with the resources at his disposal. We are all faced with those same challenges right now. As we see the collective challenges being wrestled with across Pennsylvania, let's remember we are dealing with so many pieces to the puzzle: State Police, Attorney General Units, Municipal Police, County Sheriff's Departments, County Detectives and Constables. In order to truly be more efficient and effective, Pennsylvania is long overdue in having the conversation about proper roles and responsibilities of law enforcement in each level of government. That's where we'll truly find efficiency.

Thank you for your time today.