

PSD DeGroot proceeded to break down the post line by line and detail the facts, as follows:

FIRST CLAIM:

“The members of our community believe that the current Mayor and the Town Administrator do not respect our Public Safety officials.”

As Public Safety Director for almost two years, PSD DeGroot has not received any reports from anyone to support this claim. Nor has any member of the public safety departments (i.e. Police Department, Fire Department, and Office of Emergency Management), made any such claim.

To the contrary, PSD DeGroot has been told on numerous occasions, by residents, business owners, police officers and firefighters, how well these departments are functioning, which is all due to the tremendous support and guidance of the Mayor and Town Administrator, as demonstrated by the following actions:

- Hiring of 18 new police officers since 2014. Of the 18:
 - 13 are Dover residents
 - 11 are bilingual
 - 9 have prior police experience
 - 9 have college degrees
 - 7 are military veterans
- Installation of new leadership – true, highly educated leaders – at the top levels of the department
 - Deputy Chief Anthony Smith, Master’s Degree, 28 years’ experience
 - Captain Justin Gabrys, Master’s Degree (2018), 17 years’ experience
 - Lieutenant William Newton, Master’s Degree, 12 years’ experience
 - Lieutenant Jonathan Delaney, Master’s Degree, 10 years’ experience
- Purchase of 8 new, reliable, and safe police vehicles
- Purchase of state of the art firearms and tactical gear to be prepared for active shooter scenarios at the schools, hospital, or anywhere in the community
- High-level executive leadership and tactical training

- Modernized “best-practices” policy development, implementation, and ACCREDITATION by the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police through oversight of The Rodgers Group
- Renovation of police headquarters
- Implementation of a proactive policing model, to include Community Policing, in which officers reach out and interact with the public, business owners, community support groups, schools and the hospital to enhance relations and offer free training
- Creation of the Police Chaplaincy Program, where faith-based leaders have volunteered to become members of the police department to help department personnel and residents alike in times of crisis
- Started the Police and Fire Awards program to recognize officers that go above and beyond in the performance of their duties

This list is not exhaustive, but certainly representative of the many things that would not have occurred without the support and approval of the Mayor and Administrator.

SECOND CLAIM:

“Our residents believe strongly that there is a culture of retaliation and intimidation toward some of our Town Employees.”

PSD DeGroot has never been advised by anyone of this belief since taking office almost two years ago and suggested the residents were thinking of the “culture of intimidation and retaliation” that previously existed within the police department, which the Mayor and Administrator have been systematically removing over the past several years. While it would take a great deal of time to detail the history of this old culture, suffice it to say that it was evidenced by the takeover of the police department not once, but twice, by the Morris County Prosecutor’s Office in the 1980’s and 1990’s. No other police department in Morris County has ever had this occur. The Mayor and Administrator have taken enormous steps to eliminate this toxic culture, so the town could have a respectable and professional police department filled with young, educated, and enthusiastic officers. With reference to the town’s public safety departments, no such culture presently exists.

PSD DeGroot noted that in any workforce, there will always be a certain segment that is never satisfied, overestimates their value and worth, causes problems, gets disciplined, cries retaliation, and sues looking for a payout from government's supposed "deep pockets."

THIRD CLAIM:

"During the last three years, six policeman filed lawsuits accusing (in most cases) the Mayor and/or the current Town Administrator of retaliation and intimidation."

The fact is that over the last three years, only three policemen have filed lawsuits, not six. And none of them have been settled.

However, settlement discussions are ongoing in two of the three lawsuits, both of which were filed in 2016. Worthy to note is that the two plaintiffs in these matters were previous leaders in the department and were directly involved with the previous "culture of intimidation and retaliation" mentioned above under the Second Claim. So, their pending settlements will have the intended, positive consequence of removing them from these leadership positions, thereby cutting-out their toxic effect on the new police department and officers.

In a gesture of full disclosure, PSD DeGroot addressed two additional lawsuits filed by police officers against the town *four* years ago, in 2014, which have been settled. They were both filed as a direct result of the actions of previous top leaders in the department, two of whom are the above-mentioned plaintiffs in the unsettled matters. Both officers in these two settled matters did in receive large payouts as part of their settlements, but that was because their claims of intimidation and retaliation were proven to be true with digital recordings of former police department leaders. There was no disputing their allegations, so settling the 2014 cases was the most economically-prudent thing to do.

FOURTH CLAIM:

"The total legal fees and potential settlement fees could total easily 2 million dollars."

This is patently false. The total anticipated costs of the two unsettled cases mentioned above is less than ½-million dollars. And much of that money was earned by the employees for accrued time they are entitled to by contract.

FIFTH CLAIM:

“Who will pay for the behavior of the Mayor and the Town Administrator?”

What “behavior” is this statement referring to? There have been no findings that either the Mayor or Town Administrator engaged in any of the alleged behavior. The question would be more accurately stated, *“Who will pay for the misbehavior of the past leadership in the police department?”*

SIXTH CLAIM:

“Answer = The Taxpayers of Dover.”

Again, this is a patently false statement.

Regarding the two unsettled cases from 2016, neither the taxpayers, nor the Town of Dover, have paid out any money.

And regarding the two settled cases from 2014, neither the taxpayers, nor the Town, paid anything other than what was contractually owed to the plaintiffs. All other costs were paid by the Town’s insurance carrier.

SEVENTH CLAIM:

“It is time for new leadership that respects our men in uniform.”

This is nothing more than the author’s opinion, who supplies no supporting proof. To the contrary, the current leadership in the town, in particular the Mayor and Administrator, have demonstrated a great deal of respect for our men in uniform as demonstrated above.

The seven baseless claims were followed by four recommendations as a remedy, delineated and commented on by PSD DeGroot as follows:

RECOMMENDATION 1:

***“LAW & PUBLIC SAFETY
- Equip our policeman with body cameras and the police vehicles with dashboard cameras”***

Both recommendations have been and remain under review by the police department leadership and the town administration since PSD DeGroot took office.

They are both very costly ventures. The price of the cameras alone is between \$500 - \$1000 each, depending on their quality and graphic resolution. Plus, there is an even bigger and reoccurring expense of a computer server to store and maintain all the recordings for the required timeframes. Here’s a breakdown of the potential costs:

- 25 patrol officers = \$25,000 for body cameras
- 10 patrol cars = \$10,000 for vehicle cameras
- \$1200 per officer annually for server storage = \$30,000 (or, a new 20TB in-house server, which could cost tens of thousands of dollars)

ESTIMATED MINIMUM COST TO IMPLEMENT = \$65,000 in the first year alone

Since implementing these cameras is not mandatory, and whether or not they will be beneficial to the town residents has not yet been determined, it has been financially prudent to take our time with considering them and searching for a means to fund it.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

“Foster an environment of respect from the town officials toward the police department to avoid lawsuits that have cost our taxpayers millions of dollars in settlements and legal fees during the last three years”

First, this recommendation is a day late and a dollar short. The Mayor and Administrator have been fostering this environment since 2016 when they put new leaders in command of the police department. These commanders work jointly with the Mayor and Administrator as a team in

developing a better functioning police department. The same thing can be said for the fire department and office of emergency management, who have seen dramatic, positive changes over the past two years due to key leadership moves implemented and approved by the Mayor and Administrator.

Second, regarding the statement that the lawsuits have cost our taxpayers millions of dollars in settlements and legal fees during the last three years, this is once again a bogus and false claim. Here's the truth:

- The lawsuits cost the taxpayers nothing.
- All lawsuit-related costs are paid by the town's insurance carrier.
- The only payouts by the town to the plaintiffs is what they were contractually entitled to irrespective of the lawsuits.
- The total sum of payouts and potential payouts is less than 1 million dollars, a far cry from the "millions of dollars" claimed by the author of this post.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

“Develop a culture of real community trust in our law enforcement personnel by eliminating ticket quotas and respecting the Civil Rights of our residents”

This recommendation implies there is currently no trust between the community and our law enforcement personnel, and that residents' Civil Rights are not respected. This is a serious and highly inflammatory insult to our police department, once again unsupported by facts. PSD DeGroot has received no such complaints, nor has Internal Affairs.

However, as per PSD DeGroot, if any such issues exist and have gone unreported, anyone affected is urged to report them to the proper authorities immediately. The police department does not tolerate any such behavior, strictly adhering to the requirements set forth by Directive from the New Jersey Attorney General and Morris County Prosecutor regarding policing methods. These requirements are delineated in the police department's Accreditation policies, which were just met with a 100% approval rating by the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police after

they did an in-depth review, audit, and evaluation of our police department functions over the past three years. This is a significant achievement to be very proud of.

Additionally, the police department has no ticket quotas. Although they did exist under the old police leadership, the current leadership promptly eliminated them when they took over in 2016.

And lastly, there is zero racial profiling or discrimination taking place in the police department, nor has there been any allegations of it reported since the new leadership has been in place.

The makeup of the Dover Police Department is racially diverse and has a program that proactively recruits residents from the community to become police officers. This program was applauded by the State Police Chiefs during the department's recent Accreditation due to its uniqueness. About half of our 35 member police force are minorities and bilingual, while 40% are Hispanic, many of whom are from or reside in Dover. We are proud of the makeup of our department, and the positive interaction they have with the residents in our community.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

“Improve quality of life in our neighborhoods by educating our residents about their duties regarding Code Enforcement instead of 1st offense punishment with no warning”

While Code Enforcement is outside the purview of the Public Safety Director, this claim is once again, untrue. First offenses in these matters result in property owners being issued a Notice of Violation, which simply advises them of the violation and provides 30 days for them to take corrective action. There is no punishment imposed.

CONCLUSION:

PSD DeGroot concluded the presentation thanking the Mayor, Board of Aldermen and Town Administrator for allowing this issue to be addressed, speaking truth to the false, inaccurate, offensive and baseless claims made by the Dover First political campaign.