

## MIDDLETOWN

## Looking out for public safety

*The proposed law would also detail the duties of the new public safety director.*

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Middletown is looking to give its new public safety director a little more job security.

Township solicitor Mike Savona is drafting an ordinance the supervisors will consider during the next few weeks. It specifically outlines the duties of the new director and would require a unanimous vote from the supervisors to fire the public safety director. The new director would assume command Jan. 31, when Police Chief Frank McKenna retires.

The director would still receive less protection against dismissal than a police chief, who can only be fired under certain limited conditions under the Police Tenure Act. However, the proposed unanimous vote provision would at least protect the director from the political whims of a board majority in control at any particular time, supervisors chairman Robert McMonagle said.

"We're trying to build in some job security for the person appointed," he said. "The public safety director should not have to worry about the makeup of the board. I think this would take some of the politics out of the position."

The supervisors had voted 3-2 at a meeting earlier this year to switch to a public safety director when McKenna retires. He's been a Middletown cop for 51 years, the last 20 as chief.

McMonagle, Kathy Heuer and Chuck Thompson voted for the switch, while Jasper Caro and former township cop George Leonhauser voted against.

A public safety director would not only be in charge of the police department, but would also oversee other emergency operations, including fire and ambulance services.

The township has interviewed about 15 candidates for the new job. Each supervisor has been asked to submit his or her top two or three candidates. Then, two or three will be asked back for second interviews, McMonagle said. The new director could be named in the next two or three weeks, he added.

The board of supervisors could vote to advertise the new ordinance at the Dec. 8 meeting and vote to enact it at the Dec. 22 meeting.