

Judge halts voting on police chief ordinance

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Middletown

No action was taken on naming a township police chief after a county judge issued a temporary restraining order.

Bucks County Judge Clyde Waite issued a temporary restraining order Tuesday, which prevented the Middletown supervisors from voting on an ordinance changing the township from a public safety director system and back to police chief.

The supervisors had been expected to pass the ordinance at Tuesday night's meeting, and three of the five - Democrats Chuck Thompson, Robert McMonagle and Kathy Heuer - then were expected to vote to appoint acting Public Safety Director Patrick McGinty the new police chief.

Waite's order prevented any of that until at least Dec. 8. A hearing on the matter will be held 9:30 a.m. Dec. 7 in Bucks County Courtroom 7.

Republican supervisors-elect Patrick Mallon and Drew Kreiling obtained the restraining order. They favor a police chief but feel the decision should be left to them and the remaining supervisors when a new board takes office in January.

Republicans Mallon, Kreiling and Tom Gallagher will join Republican George Leonhauser and Democrat Robert McMonagle on the board next year.

"It's about the process," Mallon said of the restraining order. "The voters elected us by a good majority and it's not right for the present board to usurp the authority the voters placed in us by making the most important hire a township can make before we take office."

McGinty, the most senior officer in the department with 35 years on the Middletown force, was promoted from lieutenant to acting public safety director in January.

"I feel bad for Patrick McGinty because he's been thrown into a political situation not of his doing," Mallon added. "He deserves better."

Thompson said it wasn't right for the judiciary to interfere in a decision the present board has every right to make.

"We have a job to do until we leave office," he said.

Waite's order prohibits the supervisors from "taking any action up to and including the adoption of the ordinance (switching back to police chief) and/or the hiring of any individual as public safety director or police chief of the township of Middletown" until at least Dec. 8.

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