

## Police chief search committee criticized

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A former Middletown supervisor said applications should have been accepted to give more people a chance to be part of the committee.

A former township supervisor at Monday night's board meeting criticized the selection process used to pick a police chief search committee.

Democrat Chuck Thompson, who was defeated in the November election, said applications should have been taken and the public given more time to comment before the committee was named during the "other business" portion of the April 6 meeting.

Members of the committee were picked by Republican Supervisor Patrick Mallon and approved by fellow GOP board members Drew Kreiling, George Leonhauser and Tom Gallagher. Democrat Robert McMonagle was the only supervisor to vote no on the committee, which will screen applications for the police chief position and recommend five finalists for the supervisors to interview.

"You didn't even pass a resolution to create this committee, and that is standard procedure," Thompson said Monday night.

The members of the committee all live or work in Middletown. They are: Bucks County Deputy District Attorney Dave Zellis; Michael Lentine Sr., a former owner and now a consultant with the Lentine Mower Center; Sherry Hessenthaler, director of Mid-Atlantic operations for Verizon; Michael Jones, vice president and chief financial officer for ISS Solutions; Dave Kemmerer, a Bucks County detective and former Middletown cop; Martin Duffy, former Newtown Township police chief; and Todd Buch, president of the McCafferty Auto Group.

"The committee was really chosen outside the public meeting and is not really a good cross-section of the community," Thompson continued. "And doing something like this late at a meeting under other business never looks good."

Mallon said the committee was not political and that he chose people he believes will do a thorough and objective job. The supervisors are not obligated to go with the five finalists recommended by the committee, he pointed out.

"To go through an application process would have been time consuming and I believe would have led to more of a political atmosphere surrounding this selection process," said Mallon. "The members who agreed to be part of the committee were not the only ones I asked. This is a different kind of search in that we're looking for a top executive, so I looked for people with executive and police experience. This is strictly an advisory committee that will offer a non-binding recommendation."

The supervisors probably won't select a new police chief until at least July or August, Mallon has estimated. Acting Public Safety Director Patrick McGinty heads the police department and has said he will apply for the chief's job.

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