

Mayor of Souderton Dan Yocum
Mayors Memo!



I don't need to remind you about the significant tax increase in Souderton this year. Like me, I'm sure you winced when you opened your tax bill last month. One of the best examples of your tax dollars at work is with our Souderton Police Department. It is the largest expense for our municipality. While times continue to change, our Police Department changes with them.

To borrow a line from our former Chief of Police Jim Leary, Souderton sometimes feels like "Norman Rockwell's America". It is an idyllic place where neighbors still know each other. People generally feel safe here. As warm weather approaches, it is a great time to see friends walking throughout our community and enjoying the many new businesses that are thriving in Souderton. Many people living in Souderton Borough will never have any significant need for our police officers. But even though you do not see crime spilling into our streets, our police call volume was up 23% in 2023.

The good news is that major crimes have decreased by 24% in Souderton. The significant increase in our police call volume was driven by less severe crimes including vehicle accidents & citations, petty theft, animal complaints, domestic situations, mental health calls, etc. There has also been an enormous increase in public service calls; non-criminal situations when people do not know what to do, so they call the police. Keys locked in the car, electrical issues in the home, medical concerns, etc. People know that they can call upon the Souderton Police for help, and we will be there to aid in any way possible! 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. These are not bad things. But they nonetheless take a significant amount of police officer time and resources.

In 2023, Souderton Borough had approximately 7,500 residents and a total of eight (8) sworn police personnel, which included the Chief of Police and Detective. This is the lowest officer-per-resident ratio of any similarly-size Borough in Montgomery County. For example, Ambler has almost the same population as Souderton and has 14 police officers. Even neighboring Telford has nine (9) officers for 30% fewer residents. Unlike most Chiefs of Police, Chief Newhall personally responded to an average of four calls a day in 2023 simply because of staffing issues. Borough Council is happy that major crimes remain low, and we want it to stay that way! So in 2024, we are hiring one additional patrol officer and purchasing one additional police vehicle. *Your tax dollars at work!*

A note from Chief of Police Brian Newhall:

Quick question for you: When you think of the police, what is the image that pops into your head? A lot of people go by what they see on television or on the internet, and sometimes these portrayals and stories have some truth to them, but often they don't. For instance, it's very hard to solve a



crime in an hour like they do on television! *What I'm wondering is:* what is it you think of when you consider the members of your police department here in Souderton?

Here is a fun fact for you: The first formally organized police force was created by Sir Robert Peel in 1829 in London, England. Sir Peel famously stated, "The police are the people, and the people are the police," meaning that law enforcement officers come from and are a part of the population and community that they serve. He was right then, and he's right now. Let's talk about the "Police are the people" part: Your police here in Souderton are *people*. They're just like you in a lot of ways. They work, they go to school, they have bills, they have families, loved ones, homes or apartments, pets, and friends. They have things that make them happy, sad, angry, and there are things that scare them.

Since your police officers are human, they're not perfect, and they don't always get things done the way they, or you, would like them to (for various reasons). When they're at work, they're doing a job, and it's a very personal job because they have decided to work for and protect the people of Souderton the best they can. It's a decision they take very seriously. A lot of people think that the motto of the police is "To protect and serve". Actually, we can't always do those things because we can't be everywhere at once to protect everyone from everything, and sometimes we can't protect people from themselves. We also can't serve everybody, because some people don't want our services, which is their choice and their right.

Because of this, I like to think that our police communicate, and problem solve. We are willing to talk to anyone about anything and listen to any issues you may have. We are also willing to offer suggestions and do what we can to help you. It's why we're here and it's what we're trained to do. Please don't ever hesitate to contact us.

Back to Sir Peel and the part of his statement about "The people are the police", which is the more important part. The members of our community are why we are here, and our police department looks to you and our Mayor & Borough Council for guidance as to the direction the department should be going, what our priorities should be, and what goals we should establish to make our community as safe and enjoyable as it can be. You have a say in what we do, and we would like to hear from you. If you ever have a suggestion, an idea for improvement, or an attainable goal that you would like our police department to try to achieve, please let us know.

Like you, our police want what's best for our community. We love it here! We believe that if we work together and communicate, there are very few problems that we can't solve. We're proud to work for our community and look forward to seeing where our town is headed and what we will achieve together. *Thank you!* – **Chief Newhall**



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