

May 8, 2017

The Honorable Robert Coupe  
Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security  
Office of the Secretary  
P.O. Box 818  
Dover, DE 19903

Dear Secretary Coupe:

I am compelled to share with you an escalating concern in the Oak Orchard and Long Neck area in regards to public safety, as well as public perception about law enforcement. This issue has been exacerbated by local media coverage, including reports by the Cape Gazette and local talk radio - 92.7 FM and 105.9 FM. As a result of this increased chatter, the major television networks joined in the reporting efforts.

It is imperative that I clarify that both Troop 7 and Troop 4 have been very supportive in providing accurate information to me, as well as to the public. More importantly, the troop representatives were very patient and positive during a most challenging environment at a recent public meeting in Oak Orchard.

On Monday evening (May 1st), Senator Hocker and I had a regular "town hall" event with our Oak Orchard residents. The meeting usually hosts about 50-60 residents where we provide updates on transportation projects and flooding and drainage reviews, as well as pertinent legislative initiatives. In the past, we have hosted a review of public safety items to keep the residents informed and engaged. Our meeting this week, though, was "not business as usual," to say the least. Fueled by comments from the owner of Kick n' Chicken and reports of crime, residents demanded more police coverage. The attempt to explain SPEAR and how it is working did not satisfy or alleviate their concerns.

Questions to Delaware State Police included:

- "What is your response time?;" "How long will I wait for help?;" "Why can't you assign more troopers?;"  
"Why can't Millsboro respond?;" "Why can't we have a satellite troop?;"

- In addition, the public asked about incorporating their area to create their own town.

As you may recall, I have previously shared similar concerns and was successful in having Sussex County modify the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the state in 2012, when we added six State Police officers for a total of 44. I would request that we revisit the concern, thereby reviewing the formula that determines the allocation of troopers to Sussex County and our growing eastern corridor. Additionally, we must explore the impact of the seasonal population in eastern Sussex County. Perhaps, we should also consider extending the retirement age of troopers beyond the mandatory age of 55 and/or allowing retired troopers to meet specific demands during peak times without impacting their retirement benefits.

I am requesting that we provide a "business" safety training event for small businesses in the Long Neck and Oak Orchard area. They are not served by a local Chamber of Commerce; however, I would organize it and I have a location that is being provided for such an event. Your troop leaders are very receptive to this event, as well.

I have also reached out to Sussex County Administrator, Todd Lawson, to determine the County's interest or ability to fund additional troopers through the existing MOU.

In closing, I believe we should have a joint meeting in Long Neck to provide factual information, encourage neighborhood and community police programs, and compare the issues in Long Neck with issues around the

county and state (i.e., how well our county EMS system works in order to provide further "fact over fiction.")  
As the details for this upcoming meeting are confirmed, I will certainly keep you posted.

I look forward to working with you and Delaware State Police Colonel McQueen to address the concerns and to provide the best service possible to our constituents.

Sincerely,

Ruth Briggs King  
State Representative  
37th District

cc: Colonel Nathaniel McQueen, Jr., Delaware State Police