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Board approves early extension of police chief's contract

BY SARAH WOJCIK

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SHELBY TOWNSHIP — On Feb. 16, the Shelby Township Board of Trustees unanimously approved a two-year extension of Police Chief Robert Shelide's contract.

The extension takes his contract through Jan. 11, 2021. His contract previously was set to expire Jan. 11, 2019.

Shelide's contract includes a \$10,000 salary increase to \$116,590.

Shelide has led the Police Department for 13 months, since Jan. 19, 2015. He retired from the Southfield Police Department at the rank of deputy chief after 21 years.

Shelby Township Supervisor Rick Stathakis said Shelide surpassed the board's hopes when the township set out to find a police chief following the retirement of former Chief Roland Woelkers in January 2014.

"I had two areas that I wanted our next chief to personally tackle — community outreach and narcotics — and, though obviously he's done much more, in



Shelide

Contract

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both those areas, I am proud to report Chief Shelide has performed above and beyond my expectations," Stathakis said. "Regularly, my office receives calls and emails about the level of professionalism and sincerity our police officers display as they interact with our residents."

Stathakis said proof of the Police Department's community outreach is in its Facebook page, which exponentially grew to having more than 8,000 "likes" after Shelide took over.

In talking about the time since Shelide took over, Stathakis cited several major drug busts that resulted in criminal charges, which he said carried a clear message to anyone looking to sell illicit drugs in the community.

"Chief Shelide took our fight against drugs a step further, as he formed strategic partnerships between the Shelby Township Police Department and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and the FBI to ensure our officers are in the forefront of the fight against drugs," he said. "There are many more successes I could have cited tonight, but overall, the work the Police Department has done is astounding under Chief Shelide's leadership, in my opinion."

Coming into the job, Shelide said he was confident in his ability to lead, given his past experience, but he was apprehensive about working with the Board of Trustees, as he had no prior experience with politicians.

"Since I walked into the door,

(the board and I) have had nothing but productive conversation and dialogue," he said. "Nobody on the board is trying to run or manage the Police Department. They're all my strategic partners. We have a great relationship. I couldn't be happier."

Shelide said his favorite thing he has done in his time as chief has been to raise the morale of the Police Department. Sprucing up the building, including giving the roll call room a facelift, and providing a Christmas lunch, he said, are some of the ways he and Deputy Chief Mark Coil have bolstered camaraderie.

"I let people who work here know that they're important, and I've given them a voice," Shelide said. "We care about them."

His favorite operational successes, he said, include the multiple drug busts, replacing the township's K-9, providing active-shooter training to all sworn officers, and hosting a two-week Northwestern University supervisory training course at the Police Department.

Shelide spoke about the future of Shelby Township law enforcement.

"One of the main things we have to be prepared for is the onslaught of population growth by beefing up the staff and getting our resources allocated properly," he said. "In 2016, we will have a full-blown traffic unit with a sergeant and five officers."

The traffic unit's goal, he said, will be to regulate the morning and afternoon rush hours, crack down on aggressive driving and curb drunken driving. Shelide said there have been a couple of alcohol-re-

lated deaths and countless drunken driving arrests in the township since he became chief.

He also is working to create a special investigations unit and a tactical team.

The special investigations unit, which currently has two members, would handle narcotics-related crime and function as a

jack-of-all-trades focused on surveillance, arrests and anything else out of the ordinary, Shelide said.

The tactical team would handle moderate-level arrests and train one day a month. Because the department already has all the equipment, Shelide said the cost to the township would be next to nothing. Currently, when execut-

ing a search warrant, for example, Shelide said the responders are a mix from all over the department.

"One of the ways officers get killed is they don't have team training to be able to handle situations like this," he said. "It's a win-win for everybody."

Call Staff Writer Sarah Wojcik at (586) 498-1029.

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