



Mishawaka Communicator



Working together to build the "Best Hometown in America" by delivering exceptional services, promoting safe and clean neighborhoods, elevating the quality of life and inspiring pride in our community.

Dave Wood, Mayor

www.mishawaka.in.gov

November 2023

A Letter from Mayor Dave Wood



More Police Officers Will Soon Be in the Neighborhoods of Mishawaka

You've heard me assert on many occasions, and here in these lines, there is no public service provided by local government more vital than public safety. Here in Mishawaka, protecting you, your property and your neighborhood is job #1. Thankfully, our proactive approach to police work continues to keep the Princess City a safe place to live, work and raise a family.



The constant patrols, painstaking detective work, active community involvement, and focused training are all fundamental strengths of the department. I am thankful every day (and can sleep well each night) for the outstanding work performed by the Mishawaka Police Department.

You've no doubt also heard me mention it is getting more difficult to provide this service due to many factors, most notably, the difficulty in attracting and hiring qualified police officers. I have said, and I reassert here, I believe this has the potential to be a crisis in the State and beyond. Police forces are aging and more officers are retiring than

new recruits are backfilling. It quite simply comes down to the basic economic principle of supply and demand; there is more demand for police officers than there is supply in the marketplace. This is creating intense competition to attract officers among Indiana communities. In addition, we have heard loud and clear from our residents, requesting **more** officers patrolling our streets and neighborhoods.

We are determined not to be caught flat-footed by staying ahead of this issue and so creative solutions were sought. As a result, Rich Freeman, President of the Mishawaka FOP and his team brought a proposal to the administration a year ago. After careful study, I am extremely excited about an innovative, proven police staffing model that will help us accomplish our threefold goals. These are: increasing our MPD shift strength, putting more officers on the street at any given time and significantly increasing their compensation. This will make MPD officers among the highest paid in the state while not straining the City with long-term, unsustainable requirements.



Here's how it works: the City currently has 114 officers budgeted and funded in the City budget. We currently have about 96 officers on the force, and it would take us years to get to the 114 budgeted number. Our officers currently work an 8-hour shift on a 6-day on, 3-day off rotation. There are currently three shifts. After January 1, 2024, we will have 99 officers in the budget (down from 114). Officers will work 12-hour work shifts, seven days out of a 14-day cycle. The model will take us to 2-shifts (down from 3).

(cont'd on next page)



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Dec 21 Third Thursday
- Nov 23-24 Thanksgiving Day Holiday (City Offices Closed)
- Dec 2 WinterFest / Santa's Arrival (Ironworks Plaza)
- Dec 25 Christmas Day Holiday (City Offices Closed)
- Dec 26 Christmas Eve Holiday (City Offices Closed)
- Jan 1 New Year's Day Holiday (City Offices Closed)

MISHAWAKA ORGANIC CENTER CLOSING FOR THE SEASON

The Organic Resource and Household Hazardous Waste Center on 5th Street in Mishawaka will close for the season after end of business on Saturday, December 2, 2023.



ONLINE

- <https://mishawaka.in.gov>
- <https://facebook.com/cityofmishawaka>
- <https://mishawaka.in.gov/communicator>
- <https://mishawaka.in.gov/parksandrecreation>
- <https://twitter.com/MishawakaMayor>
- <https://instagram.com/MishawakaMayor/>

A Letter from Mayor Dave Wood *(continued)*



Officers will work more hours in their workday. Shifts will go from a minimum of 10 officers on duty to 14 to 16 at any given time. The benefits to the community will be more officers on the street.

Officers will work more hours annually and we will compensate them for their time. Officers will make \$90,000 per year in the second year of the agreement. They will also receive more days off in a row including every other weekend so they have quality family time off-duty. The City can do this in a revenue-neutral way by not funding the difference between 99-114 officers. We will also save on expenses such as equipment, benefits, training, overtime, etc. This makes a win-win-win situation for the community, our MPD officers and the City!

As you can imagine with anything government related, initiatives of this magnitude happen neither quickly nor

easily. The new proposal took months to develop and had to be written into the City's budget and salary ordinance. A completely new collective bargaining agreement/contract had to be written and approved requiring the approvals of the Board of Public Works & Safety, the Mishawaka Common Council and the Fraternal Order of Police. I'm happy to say the FOP overwhelmingly approved, and the Council unanimously approved the changes. Come January 1, the new model will take effect and I believe with it, the long-term health and stability of the Mishawaka Police Department and best prospects for the safety of the City of Mishawaka.

Word of the new model has already got out, far beyond our borders. I have been approached by mayors (and Chief Witkowski has been approached by chiefs) all over the State inquiring into what we are doing. Perhaps the best result so far is that we are already seeing more applicants in the department, including lateral transfers. We always seek to hire the best of the best and this ensures our ability to continue to do that into the future.

I'm proud to have played a significant role in the development of this creative new concept but I am most proud of the collaborative effort making it a reality. I'd like to thank my administrative team, including Police Chief, Ken Witkowski, Assistant Chief of Records Division, Alex Arendt, Assistant Chief of the Uniform Division, Craig Nowacki and City Controller, Rebecca Maguire, the FOP team, including President Richard Freeman, Sgt. Miles Andrews, Sgt. Jonathan Phipps, Sgt. John Comeau and Lt. Joshua Mortimore. I'd also like to recognize Council President, Gregg Hixenbaugh for his leadership and playing a significant role in discussions.

Looking ahead, we have already begun substantive discussions with leaders of School City of Mishawaka to bring a creative new model and partnership to provide school resource officers to Mishawaka schools making our schools safer – perhaps a great topic for a future article!

Yours in Mishawaka,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mayor Dave Wood".

FALL LEAF PICKUP

The Mishawaka Street Department has begun the city's annual fall leaf collection program and will follow a schedule that should help residents plan their leaf raking activities.

Leaves will be picked up each week on the day before each resident's regular trash pick-up day. Those with a Monday trash pickup will have their leaves picked up on Friday. The leaf collection program will continue through Friday, December 15th, weather permitting.

Residents should follow these guidelines:

- **Leaves should be raked to the edge of the curb** and should be free of branches, twigs, stones or similar foreign objects which can damage equipment and delay leaf pick-up.
- **Do not to rake leaves into the street immediately after a vacuum unit has passed through an area** since the vacuum unit will not return until the next scheduled pick-up time and leaves may clog sewer inlets or blow back into yards or streets.
- **As always, leaves may be bagged and put out with your weekly trash pick-up.** The City has requested the Republic Services bag limit be waived between Monday, October 24, 2022 and Friday, December 16, 2022 during the Leaf Collection Program.
- **Mishawaka residents may take brush to the Mishawaka Organic Center**, 1105 East Fifth Street, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. *Please note that the Mishawaka Recycling Center's LAST day of operation will be Saturday, December 2, 2023.*

Questions? Contact Street Commissioner Tim Ryan at the Mishawaka Street Dept. at (574) 258-1660.

Send your questions, comments, or concerns to communicator_feedback@mishawaka.in.gov