

Firm Hired for Medford, Medford Lakes Study

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MEDFORD LAKES -- A Cumberland County firm has been selected to study the benefits of shared police services between Medford and Medford Lakes.

The \$29,500 bid from Millville-based Salmon Ventures LTD was chosen from six that were submitted to the borough late last month, ranging from about \$28,000 to \$64,000.

Medford Lakes Mayor Paul Weiss said the firm was chosen because of its familiarity with South Jersey and because the police and municipal officials agreed its bid was the strongest.

"They seemed to be well prepared. Their experience and their project team seemed like a good fit for the makeup of our town and our department," Medford Lakes Police Chief Frank Martine said Monday, noting that Salmon's team includes a former police chief with experience in a small department.

Officials at Salmon said Monday they could not comment on the study because they had not been told of council's decision.

The borough began looking at shared police services to cut costs in January. In March, council rejected an initial proposal from Medford to wait for the study.

Salmon will be charged with evaluating current services, including annual service calls, patrol hours and crime statistics, as well as determine potential costs and savings for each municipality. Public hearings will be held in both towns before a final report is issued.

Martine said Monday he hopes the study "proves we're an efficient police department, that we're a good product."

He added, however, that he welcomed sharing some services.

"If we can become better, more efficient . . . you can't justify not doing it," he said.

Medford Chief Anthony Canale agreed.

"If someone wants to come in and study us for this type of thing, we're certainly going to be good neighbors," he said.

Borough officials hope to fund the study through a shared services grant from the state Department of Community Affairs. Medford will have to approve Salmon's proposal before the study could begin.

Medford Lakes residents vehemently opposed Medford's initial merger plan, which called for the township's department to absorb Medford Lakes' eight-member force.

A handful of Medford Lake residents, including former Mayor David Wasson, have begun the process of recalling Weiss because of his support for consolidation.

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