



Hellertown Police Officers Begin Using Body-Worn Cameras

Josh Popichak

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The Hellertown Police Department has officially joined thousands of other law enforcement agencies throughout the U.S. that rely on body-worn cameras to help keep officers and members of the public safe.

At a borough council meeting Monday night, Chief Robert Shupp told council members his department's officers would begin wearing the grant-funded cameras on Tuesday.

"We have been working on this for a few years," Shupp acknowledged.

He said funding the purchase of the body-worn cameras was initially a challenge, but that a \$50,000 Northampton County grant ultimately made the difference.

"Body-worn cameras are a huge asset, not only to the police, but also to the public," he said.

Shupp told council the cameras are linked to the department's computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system, which means that every time they respond to an incident, footage from it will be automatically downloaded to the system.

The cameras record both video and take still photographs, he said.

Shupp also noted that the police department's union had already approved the new body-worn cameras for use by their members.

"We're not reinventing the wheel," he told council of a policy for the cameras, which he said mirrors the policies used by many other police departments.

"This has been a long time coming," borough council president Tom Rieger said, before thanking Shupp for his work on securing the cameras for the department.

"This is a benefit to the community," Rieger added.

The cameras the department will use are manufactured by the California company LensLock, which noted in a press kit about them that body-worn cameras can:

- Increase public trust in the police
- Decrease citizen complaints lodged against police departments
- Decrease "use of force incidents"

- Increase the amount of time officers can spend on patrol
- Increase the number of guilty pleas by arrestees

“In 2016, a study done by the Cato Institute/YouGov found that 92 percent of Americans are in favor of requiring police officers to wear body cameras while 55 percent are willing to pay more in taxes to make (them) a reality.”

Since the Hellertown Police Department’s cameras were purchased with grant money, their use won’t directly impact taxpayers in the borough.

“We would like to thank...the county for their support,” Shupp said at the meeting.