

## History of Policing in Duluth Township

*Thanks to Chief Shawn Padden, Jay Zink, Helen Hendrickson, and Ann Cox for information about our police.*

Our Township has been served by “constables” or “police officers” since its organization in 1930 – we’re 80+ years old! The April 1972 “Landmarks” (our former Township publication) noted:

“There was a time...when the one constable needed to do little more than appear at local dances and be present during elections. The constable had the honor of representing authority but he had neither the training nor the equipment to enforce the law. His presence was considered sufficient reminder that proper behavior was expected. As the community grew, the responsibility grew. Today (ie. 1972) two men, usually working together, may average about 50 hours each, per month. During smelting season they may need to serve twice as much. They ‘keep an eye’ on your home, if notified that you are away during a vacation. They provide emergency care and assistance. They supervise many school activities. They enforce traffic and snowmobile laws to prevent possible accidents on ... roads within the Township. They also drop in at local gathering spots for juveniles or adults to forestall possible trouble.” (Ed: At one time we had 6 stores and 9 taverns).

At the start, constables used their own cars. The Township provided a uniform (a star badge and brown uniform) and in 1971, purchased a squad car (a used MN Highway Patrol vehicle with a bonus, our first radar!). Constables were elected for a 2 year term by Township residents and sworn in when elected. It has always been a second job. Starting in the mid-1980’s the State required local officers to be trained and licensed ultimately by the State Police Board and to have annual refresher training. After licensing was required, only 27 of the 150 constables in Minnesota chose to become licensed. Jay Zink who had been our constable since 1974 was licensed and continued to serve until 1994. The election of officers came to an end and the Town Board hired what were then called “police officers” (the title “constable” was left out of new statutes). The Township was also required to adopt eleven policing policies. Shawn Padden was hired in May 1988 as our first licensed police officer and served our Township with Jay Zink. Shawn had taken the necessary police training in Hibbing and had his Police Board license. He continues as our Police Chief today. By 1986, officers were included in PERA, the State retirement fund and in 1995 became members of the Steelworker’s Union on a par with other professionalized departments. In 1995 the Township authorized 160 hours per month for two officers and these hours are now shared by our three officers providing better backup scheduling and regular coverage of more times of the day and night (plus some family time at home). In 2004 Township residents at the Annual Town Meeting voted to increase policing hours and raise the number of officers to four but this later proved to be unnecessary and we have gone back to 160 hours per month and three officers. Township police exchanged backup support with neighboring agencies as is true today.

Early records have been archived in Chisholm, but Jay Zink provided a list of early constables including (starting in the 1950’s) Paul Saari, Russell Hagglund, Eddie Hill, Jack Christianson, Keith Thomas, Rick Larson, Jay Zink, Ray Alseth, Ron Thorne, Bob Brazil, Bill Deem, Richard Erlander, Mike Scott, Paul Johnson, Rick Swanson, Tom Wick, and our current officers, Shawn Padden, Steve Peterson (hired June 2002), and Mike Peterson (Jan. 2005).

Township Officers have had full-time police jobs in nearby communities. We benefit from their annual and specialized police training, law enforcement contacts and access to various databases that their full-time job supports. Our police officers have special training including handling child and elder abuse, K-9 use in searches, drug investigation, traffic enforcement, various anti-crime routines, etc. Recently one of our officers retired from his full-time job and is now able to cover a variety of patrols in the Township when

other officers are busy. Our three current officers bring us 70+ years of policing experience.

The Police Department sets aside a budget to permit leasing a replacement squad vehicle every five years or so. Grants have been received to upgrade equipment allowing up-to-date communication and access to law enforcement databases. Communication is essential with all 29 law enforcement agencies in northeast Minnesota. Grants and equipment from other agencies helps with the list of needed or desirable equipment: 3 new radios compatible with the new law enforcement system, upgrading the office computer, digital recorder, military-type binoculars (*assists in lake searches*), repelling rope and life jackets (*anticipating more public water accidents*), etc. Their current office (*upstairs at the Town Hall*) needs upgrading as well.

Over the years, our officers have had a working relationship with County Sheriff officers who were called in for major crimes and emergencies. Sheriff's officers in southern St Louis County cover a much larger population and area and may be busy many miles away, making it hard to respond quickly.

Community-centered policing is one advantage of having our own Police Department. Officers are Township residents, know our area and families and share a resident's concern. Our police also provide a range of service beyond 9-1-1 emergency calls, such as requested home and businesses checks, and added patrols upon request. Officers serve on our school's *Safe and Drug Free Committee*; they help with security concerns and talk with kids and parents; and they report police activity to Township residents (*see the 2011 March Newsletter*). Residents can sign up to receive email crime alerts (*with map location*). They know the pulse of the community and, with resident help, spot unusual events, check out suspicious vehicles and strangers to the area, provide assistance for medical emergencies, juvenile or domestic troubles, patrol speeding on Township roads, animal complaints, run-aways, neighbor disputes, personal injury accidents, disturbances, property damage complaints, and help Township officials with ordinance violations. *The result is that we have a lower crime rate in many respects than surrounding areas* (*see the list online or in the March Newsletter and note types of crime that aren't included!*). The cost is less than half what it would be to sub-contract with other licensed officers for these community policing services.

Our Police respond to 9-1-1 emergency calls. For less urgent information or requests call the Department's mobile cell phone: 218-393-8407 or the Town Hall and leave a message: 218-525-5705, or use email: [DuluthTwpPolice@duluthtownship.org](mailto:DuluthTwpPolice@duluthtownship.org). Our Department has an information page on the Township web site.