

TAX FACTS

An Analysis of Conditions in the Borough of Allendale Effecting the Local Tax Rate

By GEORGE M. WILSON

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HAS THE POLICE DEPARTMENT BEEN GIVEN A BLANK CHECK?

The present police department as established in September of 1928 by ordinance was primarily intended to alleviate a condition in vogue at that time detrimental to the best interests of Allendale. In conjunction with the determining factor in the placing of a particular man at the head of the department, this was accompanied by a careful buildup by interested persons in the borough who believed the man suggested was the best fitted for the position from among the group of marshals who formerly acted as special police.

Between the years 1928 and 1932 this choice of personnel proved to be warranted, in that the head of the department gave to the borough considerable time and effort to maintain a friendly feeling between the so-called department and the people, indiscriminately giving service to the people of this municipality.

Do not forget however, that even at that time a slow but thoughtful development was taking place directed at additional personnel and ultimately a larger department.

In 1932 traffic on Route No. 17, better known to us as the Franklin turnpike, was so heavy that the Mayor and Council decided it would be good business to employ another patrolman. Their reason for so doing was not only that the traffic control problem was more than one man could handle but our special marshal service had become an overload and constantly helped to over-expend the budget.

The average income from fines and penalties yearly averaged \$900.00 and it was considered good business to appropriate an additional \$600.00 which would then permit the hiring of another full time patrolman.

This worked out fairly successfully, but in 1936, for some unexplained reason, an item appeared in the breakdown of the police department as submitted to the Mayor and Council by the departmental head, amounting to \$800.00, this item was set up as a relief man. There also appeared another item listed as Marshal Service, amounting to an appropriation of \$150.00. Now bear in mind the fact that the special marshals who are present at baseball games, public functions and attractions receive their pay from the individual organization

producing the show and therefore their pay does not come out of municipal funds and is not charged against the police appropriation.

In 1935 the State Highway Department completed new Route 2 and thereupon eliminated 90 per cent of this borough's traffic problems.

Let's thoroughly understand during the five years beginning in 1932 and which figures were submitted in a former statement, the police appropriation was over-expended. It is my purpose to show the budget appropriations and expense are distinctly not the actual cost to the municipality. For instance permit me to discuss the year 1936 and show the actual cost to the borough of this so-called two-man police department.

The budget appropriation for the department for the year 1936 was set at \$5,850.00, yet the official auditors report shows an expenditure of \$6,480.07 or an over-expenditure of \$630.07. As previously stated the income from fines and penalties had averaged \$900.00 yearly and in view of the fact that new Route 2 would take away considerable traffic and thus eliminate some of the fines, the anticipated income was therefore cut to \$400.00 for the year 1936. The auditors report shows that but \$54.00 of this amount was collected thereupon showing a deficit of \$346.00 in this particular item alone. A further study of the situation shows that all the items legally chargeable to the police account are not actually set up in that particular account and are therefore not charged to police, but rather to some other department. For instance let's take one item, namely that of Insurance. Said insurance on the patrol car and the personnel amounts to approximately \$330.00 per year, yet it is charged to an insurance account and not to the police account where it rightfully belongs. The result is a tendency to produce a report that is unfair to the department and the people who are paying the freight, in that they do not procure a true statement and estimate of the actual conditions as they exist. Now just what do the above figures mean, just this, the over expenditure of the budget appropriation of \$630.07 coupled with the loss of revenue of \$346.00 shows a deficit at the end of the year of 1936 of

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\$976.07, which unless picked up by some more efficient department would have resulted in increased taxation. Had not some other municipal department shown a surplus or unexpended balance which could be transferred to the overexpended police appropriation, to offset their deficit for the year, the taxes in 1937 would have been increased approximately four points to clear that deficit.

By the same token the police expenditure for the year 1936 should show an amount of \$6,810.07 instead of the \$6,480.07 report submitted.

As some members of the Council hold their expenses down in their department and in some instances show savings, how is it that the police department for the last five years has shown an over-expenditure and a loss to the municipality that is constantly sapping the surplus revenue account of this borough. Why does the head of this department constantly demand more and more of the things that his departmental appropriation cannot afford to expend? Should some other departmental head request an item that might over-expend his account, the request is emphatically denied, yet this little two-man police department apparently runs wild with no check on the expense.

Furthermore since the advent of the second patrolman in 1932 there has been and is a constant buildup in an attempt to procure a third man. This is evidenced by the fact that the item of \$800.00 appears in the 1936 police appropriation as a relief man and the \$150.00 marshal service appropriation. Further on October 13, 1932 in order to allay rumors that were prevalent, that a third man was contemplated on the police department, a resolution was presented and passed by the Mayor and Council which is recorded as follows: "Quote "Resolved that this body go on record that it does not favor any addition to the Police Department" Unquote.

Since 1936 these same rumors still persist and have to this day and age been publicly spoken of by members of this Council who have stated they favor the three-man department. Should this buildup be overlooked and not definitely stopped, where is this constant mounting expense going to end. Is the police department by any chance the most important department in the municipality?, decidedly not.

Insurance statistics list water department first, health department second, fire department third, police department fourth.

It is my belief this Allendale police department has been created in the strength of publicity, highly publicized in the local newspapers, personal intent of corrupt wide power.

Next week my article will discuss the efficiency of the police department.

GEORGE M. WILSON