

Irked by cop merger report



THE COLUMN

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Does a string of three as-yet unsolved killings in Hempstead since June 30 have Mayor Wayne Hall considering merging his village police department with Nassau County's?

Absolutely not.

Hall, in fact, still is steaming over a flawed report — now the subject of a Nassau district attorney's office investigation into county contracting practices — that a county contractor wrote about a potential merger.

The report, portions of which may have been plagiarized, according to the district attorney's office, was written by retired NYPD Det. Richard "Bo" Diel.

He says he was asked to study the feasibility of merging Hempstead's and Freeport's village police departments into

Nassau's force.

That, literally, came as news to village officials, including Hall, who would have had to approve any such move.

"I wasn't told anything, I had to find out by reading it in *Newsday*," Hall said. "I haven't had an apology from the county, I haven't heard anything from them."

Hall said the village itself at one point had discussed the prospect of a merger with Nassau's force, but quickly ruled it out.

"We concluded that our village would end up getting less service, less attention than our force provides our residents now," Hall said.

Besides, Nassau police — who investigate major crimes, including homicides, for the village — already work well with village police, Hall said.

Last week, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Long Island Gang Task Force — made up of federal agents and Hempstead and Nassau police — arrested 10 gang members that authorities said were involved in

violent crime and drug dealing in the village.

Meanwhile, investigations continue into the slayings of: Victor Benitez, 28, who was shot on the sidewalk outside a deli on Clinton Street, near the Hempstead-Garden City border on July 4; Gerraud Hill, 30, who died after being shot on Chase Street on July 3; and Jonathan Wade, 55, who died after being shot as he sat in his car on Albermarle Avenue on June 30.

All three cases remain under investigation, Nassau police said yesterday.

Hall is pressing witnesses to report anything they may have seen to police. He said village residents can do so, anonymously, should they choose, to village or county police or on the municipality's telephone app, Village Line.

Hall said he considered the spate of killings a spike, rather than a trend, pointing out that the village had gone some eight months without a killing.

"One of the locations, Albermarle Avenue, already had been

identified by our police statistician as a hot spot area," Hall said. "The other two locations don't get a lot of crime activity."

And while village police, with grants from Nassau's district attorney's office, have increased their presence — one of their cars was visible near Clinton last week — "residents give us even more eyes," Hall said.

He said surveillance cameras showed potential witnesses at all three crime scenes. "So there are people who've seen something and we need and are asking for their help," he said.

Hall has presided over an era of significant growth and proposed development for a planned renaissance of the village. "We were once Nassau's hub and we will be that again," he said.

Hall said that Hempstead's police department already is aggressively working to keep residents safe. "We're always working, and we will continue to work with other law enforcement to get that job done," Hall said.

Honors for cops in gun stop

BY JIMIN KIM

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Anything can happen in a 10-foot police pursuit.

Nassau police officers Edward Carlson and Robert Gibbons were reminded of that on a frigid night last December while patrolling in Hicksville.

What started as a routine investigation after the pair smelled marijuana smoke from inside a parked car ended with a brief pursuit on foot and a battle for a loaded handgun outside a Hicksville mall packed with shoppers.

For their efforts, which ended with a man's arrest and the recovery of a handgun, Carlson and Gibbons were recognized with "Cop of the Month" honors yesterday by the Nassau County Legislature.

The two officers are members of the department's Bureau of Special Operations, "usually the most active police officers out there making a lot of arrests,"



Nassau Police Officers Robert Gibbons, left, and Edward Carlson, with his son Connor, attend the recognition ceremony yesterday. ■ Video: newsday.com/nassau

said James Carver, president of the Nassau Police Benevolent Association, at the ceremony.

Carver said those in the unit "have this knack for knowing a crime before it even happens . . . These are the elite cops."

The officers were in plain clothes in an unmarked car at the Broadway Mall Dec. 13 when they smelled marijuana smoke coming from a car with a male and female inside. Gibbons said he eventually frisked

the man and realized something was out of the ordinary.

"As soon as I felt a handgun in his waistband," Gibbons said, "he tried running away."

Gibbons chased the man about 10 feet before catching him. But the suspect, armed with the handgun on his hip, wrestled with Gibbons, who then grabbed the man's waist and yelled "gun!" That's when Carlson got involved.

"The subject was actually on

top of my partner," Carlson said yesterday. ". . . I jumped on the subject's back and I was able to pull the weapon out from his back."

Eventually, the officers handcuffed the suspect, who was also in possession of crack cocaine, police said.

"It's a life or death situation, and you just hope that you come out on top," said Gibbons, a 17-year veteran. "You could lose everything."

Newsday

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THIS DATE IN HISTORY

1789 In an event symbolizing the start of the French Revolution, citizens of Paris stormed the Bastille prison and released the seven prisoners inside.

1881 Outlaw William H. Bonney Jr., alias "Billy the Kid," was shot and killed by Sheriff Pat Garrett in present-day New Mexico.

1913 Gerald Rudolph Ford Jr., the 38th president of the United States, was born Leslie Lynch King Jr. in Omaha, Nebraska.

1921 Italian-born anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were convicted in Dedham, Massachusetts, of murdering a shoe company paymaster and his guard. (They were executed six years later.)

1933 All German political parties, except the Nazi Party, were outlawed.

1943 President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved funds for a national monument honoring scientist George Washington Carver; it was built at Carver's birthplace in Missouri.

1999 Race-based school busing in Boston came to an end after 25 years.