

**Text from the Speech given by Chief Neil Spidaletto**  
**Promotion Ceremony June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017**

Thank you; before we begin I would like to thank Mayor Gibbs, Deputy Mayor Hertzberg, the Sparta Governing Body and the Township Manager, Mr. William Close.

In addition, I would also like to give a special thanks to several individuals and organizations with us this evening-to make this evening a very special one.

Morris County Pipes and Drums,

Sparta High School Choir Student Ryden Mederos and Music teacher, Laura Lopez (also a Sparta High Alum),

Monsignor McHugh for his invocation,

Senator Steve Oroho,

The Honorable Judge Peter Conforti for the swearing in of officers,

Dr. Rossi, the Sparta Board of Education, Principal Janet Fererro and her staff for the use of this great facility.

And Sgt. Joseph Pensado for, making sure the Sparta Police Department presents themselves in a sharp and crisp manner. Tonight obviously is no exception as his efforts once again demonstrate.

Let me begin by saying that I am more than honored to be serving as your Police Chief. I am so very fortunate to have the opportunity this evening to share this very special event with, my family, friends, and members of this community.

There is also a very large presence here in this room of emergency responders, both active and retired personnel from the ranks of, police, fire, and ambulance. I would like to take a moment to recognize some of the individuals on this stage this evening that came here to support the Sparta Police Department, myself and Lieutenants Lamon, Mulligan, and Proctor.

Your presence here this evening shows your support for our police department and the Sparta Community. It is greatly appreciated. I also want to recognize the overwhelming response and everyone else here this evening and thank you for your presence.

I immensely appreciate the opportunity that is being afforded me to serve as Chief of the Sparta Police Department. I am fully committed to giving everything I have to this department, the men and woman under my command, and the residents of this township I call home. I have been very fortunate in my life to be raised in this great town. After my time away in college, like many in this room, I decided to return to this community and be part of the great Spartan Pride.

The fact that so many people I know have chosen to do the same, speaks volumes of this community. The educational system in Sparta both public and parochial is second to none. The quality of education these institutions bring to this township is superb. Many of the officers on stage here this evening have been fortunate to have attended these educational institutions and are examples of its quality. There are many Sparta High school and Pope John alumni here this evening. Again, I would like to thank them for coming out and showing their support of this agency.

Besides the great experiences I have had living in this town, I had exposure to the Sparta Police Department at a young age, when my father joined the force in 1978.

Not many people make the career change from fire to police, it's usually the opposite that occurs, but my father decided after ten years of fighting fires in Jersey City, to make the transition to become a police officer with the Sparta Police Department.

My lifelong friends and I remember the many positive interactions with my father and his fellow officers throughout his career. (Of course these were all positive interactions)

I am very proud of my father and his career as he retired as a Lieutenant from Sparta Police Department. Because of his service and experiences, I have had the advantage over the years of being able to consistently consult with him on any obstacles or issues I came across throughout my career.

The fact that I am constantly asked about him and the compliments I receive 25 years after his retirement show exactly the true professional he was. (I also must say, that it does feel kind of good that I can now say to him that I officially out rank him, isn't that right Lieutenant?)

I fully recognize that the position of Police Chief incorporates so much more than simply acting as an agency head.

With this position comes a great deal of responsibility to the agency and to the community.

There are simple and evident expectations associated with this position, including such responsibilities as analyzing police issues within this township, formulating policies and rules within the organization, and overseeing that the laws of this state are administered and enforced impartially and fairly by our officers.

While Police Chiefs set the mission statement for the agency; it is the personnel that work for the agency that set the standard.

The position of police officer has certainly changed over the last couple of decades and so have the expectations of the public.

The amount of new laws, directives and guidelines to follow and abide by has increased ten fold over the years. The position has gotten more complex.

In addition, technology and transparency are at the forefront of most police agencies. Our agency will embrace this technology and continue to research and utilize new tools to combat crime and serve the public.

What **HAS NOT** changed in law enforcement are the dangers associated with the job. **Consistently we see senseless attacks on officers across our country and law enforcement around the world.**

Terrorist incidents nationally and globally have become all too common. It is the collective sharing of intelligence amongst local, state, and Federal law enforcement that results in the success in preventing these awful acts. **(That is the responsibility of law enforcement)**

To face these new challenges, we cannot discount or minimize the value of information that can be provided by the public if they see something suspicious or something out of place. **(That is the responsibility of everyone else in this room and the community)**

Although the law enforcement job is very rewarding at times, there are those times that it can be very difficult on those that wear the uniform.

Besides the common physical stressors of shift work and requirements to work holidays or major events, **there are emotional stressors resulting from incidents many of us first responders here in this room wish we never had to experience.**

Unfortunately, often times these stressors take its toll on the families of first responders as well.

**No matter how dangerous a situation may be or what they may face, members of law enforcement are expected to handle it professionally and accordingly.**

**In those critical incidents, whether its lifesaving or possibly life giving, I am confident that these officers on stage know what is exactly expected of them and will not hesitate one second to do, what may be necessary, no matter what threat they face or the affects it may have on them personally.**

We have recently been accepted along with Chief Almer, who is here this evening, and Washington Township Police Department to take part in the accreditation process of the Morris County Municipal Insurance Fund. We are very excited about this endeavor as I know the Township Manager is as well. This is culmination of several years of work to get the opportunity to further demonstrate the professionalism of the Sparta Police Department. We welcome it.

This process will further allow our agencies to reach our administrative and operational goals and further strengthen our relationship and commitment to our community.

It will allow us to instill the best practices from other accredited agencies throughout the state. This process when complete will be a significant professional achievement for our department.

I am also very proud of our continued efforts to educate and inform the public on topics concerning emergency preparedness through our public safety initiative and our Community Matters Platform. Our public safety commission continues to develop and implement new ways to keep our community informed on how to best prepare and react in times of emergency.

Also under the STEP initiative, we rely on and utilize our Citizen Emergency Response Team, one of the largest in the County, to assist us with any large scale or emergency events.

Our recent commitment to the Stigma Free initiative spearheaded by Morris County Sherriff Gannon is something we are very proud of as well. This initiative dovetails with our support and active involvement with the Sussex County Clear Program, created and organized by Newton Police Chief Richards, Prosecutor Francis Koch, and the Center for Prevention and Counseling. These two programs are just a couple of examples of how law enforcement continues to evolve in dealing differently with significant social issues facing our community including mental health and addiction.

Like with most organizations though, the most important asset and component are the people you have working for and more importantly **with you**. I have worked with many of these officers here tonight through out my career in different capacities. Not only are these officers trained, skilled and very capable in their responsibilities, but they understand the most basic principles of Law Enforcement.

These principles have been around since the beginning of Policing since 1829 with the inventor of Modern Policing Sir Robert Peele. Most of these 9 principles he created can be summed up in one.

*“Police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence” .*

These 9 principles and the one I just quoted, eventually transformed into the simplified role of what is expected of Law Enforcement. Simply, to Protect and Serve.

It is our relationship with the community, the businesses, the schools, the religious institutions and the entire fabric of Sparta which is always our top concern. I believe we have done a great job over the years forming these important relationships under the leadership of Chief Reigstad and the other Sparta Police Chiefs. This is something that we will continue to strive to improve.

Besides our officers continuing to provide the services I just spoke of, there are many other employees that make the Sparta Police Department what it is. Our regional dispatch center and our professional dispatchers within provide a very critical and necessary service to four other towns besides ours, and dispatch for 15 separate police, fire, and ems agencies. These are the individuals answering everyone's call for help. They are highly trained and experienced and often are the first people contacted when someone is in need of assistance.

I would be remiss to not mention the support provided by our other civilian employees providing services through our records, technology unit including

John Liguori and David Drew, and administrative needs. These individuals consistently work hard for our community and allow for the fluid function of this agency day in and a day out. The success of this agency also relies on these people. I know the success of my job is relies highly on my administrative assistant, Kee Rider. (Now Kee has worked for 4 of the 9 chiefs in the history of the police department. I don't know how she does it but she literally looks younger with each one.)

The individuals I have introduced to you on Stage here and in this room with me all in law enforcement are more than my colleagues. They are mentors as well as peers individuals that I have learned from and will continue to learn from throughout my career. They are the part of the law enforcement brain trust that I can rely on should we ever need direction or advice. There are hundreds, maybe over a thousand years of law enforcement experience in this room this evening. That's right a thousand a thousand. (Some of you contributing to this number a lot more to that number than others).

As I mentioned before, these formed partnerships and the information and intelligence sharing amongst these individuals and many more are paramount to getting things accomplished.

I am truly honored not only by their presence this evening, but more so because of their continued commitment to what they do and what they stand for in their respective positions. (I believe they all deserve a round of applause!)

To sum things up as Sparta Police moves forward and try to simplify our goals in the future in what sometimes can be as I said, a very complex job, we are committed to doing the following three things.

1. We will continue to be vigilant and proactive in locking up people who break the law, especially those people who victimize others.
2. We will show compassion and empathy to individuals who are in need and have called us for help or assistance, and will either provide this assistance or get them the help they need.
3. We will continue to strive for new ways to improve on how we can better serve the needs of this great community.

Lastly and certainly not least there is my family.

I have spoken about my father and his influence on me throughout my life. My mother Barbara, has been equally influential with her support, love, and direction throughout my life. I make it a point to talk to her almost every day.

My inlaws, Steve and Arlene Kayne for always supporting my wife and I over the years, especially throughout my promotional testing process. (which many can attest to is a bear!) I owe a great deal to them.

And of course, my beautiful wife Lisa. She has been my rock, my foundation, my direction and motivation. Very simple without her, I am not standing here. I love you.

Now it is with great pleasure and pride that I get to introduce to you three individuals that will serve as the command staff for the Sparta Police Department from this day forward. Each of these officers have had distinguished and exemplary careers of their own.

Each possesses the attributes and fortitude in what I just explained. I could not be more proud to have each of them serving in the capacity of Lieutenant. Further, I am more than confident that these individuals will provide positive leadership and direction to the rest of the officers of this police department.

Lt. John Lamon, is a 24 year veteran of the Sparta Police Department, he possesses a Bachelors degree from William Patterson University. He has served our country in the United States Navy enlisting in 1977 serving as active and reserve status as a Navy "Seabee."

John has certainly set the example within this agency as a proactive officer who consistently interdicted in narcotics trafficking throughout his career.

John, early in his career, was asked to lend his investigative talents to the Sussex County Narcotics Task force for sometime where he was able to use these skills he developed to better serve the entire county on combating the narcotics distribution problem.

He has numerous certifications throughout his years, and served as an instructor in a variety of capacities. He recently has taken over the Sparta Police Youth Division a program that has become a complete success educating the youth in this community on a variety of different topics.

He has served in the position of Patrol Sergeant for the last 8 years and led a squad to perform efficiently and effectively.

John is a true attribute this agency. Pinning the badge on Lt. Lamon this evening will be his wife, Beth.

Lieutenant Terrence Mulligan, is a 20 year veteran of the Sparta Police Force. He obtained a Bachelors of Arts Degree from Farleigh Dickenson University, followed by a Masters Degree in Public Administration from this same institution. He and his family have roots to this community for over 40 years. Terrence also has a long history of law enforcement in his family, in particularly his father Joseph Mulligan, who with the NYPD worked with the elite bomb squad and hostage negotiation unit.

Terrence started his career in the patrol division as a very proactive officer focusing his efforts on narcotics and D.W.I. enforcement. He made detective after 7 years and like myself, was mentored by and worked side by side with DSG. John Schanstra.

Terrence has served as president of the Sussex County Detectives Association. Terrence has proven himself throughout multiple positions of this agency. As detective sergeant he was tasked with and will continue to be in charge of the most delicate and sensitive investigations within this township.

His professionalism and work ethic are to be admired. We have relied on him over the years to train and advise other officers in a multitude of areas within this agency.

Terrence is a true attribute to this agency. Pinning the Badge on Lt. Mulligan this evening will be his beautiful Mother, Grace.

Lieutenant Dennis Proctor, is 24 year veteran of the Sparta Police Department. He possesses an associate's degree from Drew University. Dennis is our most seasoned and one of the most knowledgeable officers within this agency who brings a significant amount of experience to this department. He has served this agency from patrol, to Field Training Officer, to Patrol Sergeant and onto headquarters sergeant.

Dennis has always been highly regarded amongst his peers within this agency. His professionalism and demeanor when working with the public set an example for our officers on what to expect. Dennis has been in charge of our training programs within this agency for some time ensuring our officers are proficient in the tasks they need to accomplish.

He is also the individual that has been in charge of and assisting in planning any of the variety of successful public events that occur within Sparta Township throughout the year. His leadership and character set an example for the other members of this department.

Dennis is a true attribute to this agency. Pinning the Badge on Lt. Proctor will be his daughterí .

I would now like to call to the stage, the families of Lieutenant John Lamon, Lieutenant Terrence Mulligan, and Lieutenant Dennis Proctor at this time for the swearing in to the position of Lieutenant.