

## **Mum's the word on Mt. Joy chief Mount Joy officials have maintained a united front in their refusal to speak publicly about the administrative action being taken against Police Chief John O'Connell.**

But they're kidding themselves if they don't think the public has a pretty good idea of what's going on. Hey, it's a small town, and people talk.

O'Connell, 47, was placed on administrative leave on July 23, 2012, but continues to draw his \$83,591 annual salary.

Officials at the time said nothing other than the action was a "personnel issue" involving O'Connell, who joined the force at 20 and has been chief since 2007.

That's what they're told to say to avoid a possible legal entanglement. But a compelling argument can be made that a police chief is not just your average, run-of-the-mill municipal employee.

A police chief, although appointed to the post, is not unlike an elected mayor or council member in that he or she is a recognized community leader.

Actually, a police chief may be especially important because he or she is responsible for keeping the community safe from harm.

Mayor Mary Ginder and other Mount Joy officials no doubt understand this, but nonetheless opted to play it safe by remaining mum about O'Connell.

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Little wonder the rumor mill is churning in Mount Joy.

Ginder added fuel to the fire on Friday by acknowledging residents' frustration with the borough's handling of the matter. But, she said, "I'm on the other side of the process and I know there is progress being made."

That's little consolation for taxpayers, who ultimately will feel the brunt of whatever is decided. As it stands now, taxpayers already are on the hook for higher legal costs -- costs which contributed to the latest increase in taxes.

Officials don't help by taking so long to bring the matter to a conclusion. After all, the issue has been dragging on for five months and counting -- with O'Connell continuing to cash his taxpayer-paid paycheck.

Borough officials are reluctant to speak candidly about O'Connell, but that won't keep residents from speculating about him. Some of what they say likely has more than a kernel of truth.

Mount Joy residents may never know the full story, but you can bet they've pieced together enough of the details to render any official word from the borough as old news.

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