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Sewell Named Powder Springs Police Chief

City Manager Rick Eckert made the recommendation to the City Council shortly before 10 this morning, followed by a 5-0 approval vote.

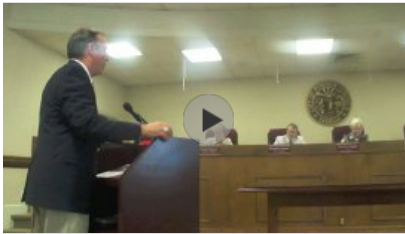
By [Michael Stone](#) | [Email the author](#) | July 7, 2011

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After more than seven months without having someone permanent at the helm of the [Powder Springs Police Department](#), the city has selected a police chief: [Charlie Sewell](#).

“You have a real good police department, and I’m looking forward to getting in and getting my feet wet,” he told the City Council this morning. “We have a long way to go, but with the quality of people we have, you can’t do anything but go up.”

City Manager Rick Eckert made his recommendation shortly after a 9 a.m. executive session of about 45 minutes with the council, followed by approval from all five members. The only topic of this morning’s called meeting was the selection of a police chief.

“I’m very excited, but I’m humbled at the same time,” Sewell said after the meeting. “I know the competition was very, very stiff, and I greatly appreciate the confidence of the city manager and the council.”

Sewell, the current chief of the McMinnville, TN police department, was chosen over current interim chief and Cobb County police Maj. [Tom Arnold](#), and [Jeffery Pearce](#), an assistant special agent in charge for the Atlanta Field Division for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

The three [were selected out of a field of 31 initial applicants](#) by an independent panel consisting of Kennesaw Police Chief William Westenberger, Marietta Police Chief Dan Flynn, and Gerald Peal, owner of the APeal Agency, which specializes in polygraphs.

“When we narrowed it down, it was a very, very tough decision,” Mayor Pat Vaughn said. “I think Mr. Sewell’s level of experience will bring a great deal to the city.”

Two main reasons Eckert game for Sewell’s selection: He is the only candidate with police chief experience, and his educational background includes a bachelor’s in criminal justice and master’s in public administration from Columbus State University.

“We had three of the best of the best—I can’t say enough good about all three candidates,” Eckert said. “This was a very hard choice.”

The city manager thanked Arnold, who was in attendance at the meeting, for the work he has done as interim chief while remaining on full time with Cobb County police. He [was sworn in as interim chief](#) in early April.

“We can’t say enough good about (Arnold) because he was fantastic with stepping into a very difficult situation,” Eckert said.

In May, Arnold helped the department transition from its downtown location on Pineview Drive to its new home, the renovated Ace Hardware building on Sailors Parkway.

Eckert also complimented Pearce on his experience, saying that him not being selected isn’t “downing what he does with ATF because that can be very dangerous work and very tedious work, and he excels at that.”

Sewell will start in Powder Springs by Aug. 15 or sooner, Eckert said. His possible salary, which is still being negotiated, will be between \$55,000 and \$94,000, but once decided, the final amount will likely be somewhere between \$80,000 and \$90,000, he said.

The city manager said he will be working with Sewell to work towards some cost-savers with the department, which saw \$275,000 in cuts for this fiscal year amid [a \\$346,000 general budget shortfall](#) for the city.

At last month’s first reading of the current budget, which started July 1, Eckert said the police department [takes up all the city’s property taxes](#), plus other funds. He said he would like to see the new chief help take the property tax use down to a maximum of 75 percent.

The city manager said he will now begin setting up a transition process between Arnold and Sewell, who will be “actively involved in the department” before settling in permanently.

There’s a full police department staff meeting scheduled for Friday evening, Eckert said.

Sewell said some his goals are:

- Examining the talent of the department and looking into different ways to restructure it to accomplish various goals.
- Getting the department certified by the state, which requires 129 standards of liability to be met to help protect its employees.
- Starting a citizens police academy: “It gives us an opportunity to break down barriers, bring the public closer to us,” he said. “We like to think we can do the job alone, but it takes the police and the citizens working together.”

A 1968 graduate of Clarkston High School in Clarkston, GA, Sewell started with the Morrow Police Department in 1975 as a police officer. He worked there until 2005, serving as the department’s chief from 2004 to 2005.

He retired in December 2005 but reemerged to become McMinnville’s police chief in September 2006.

While in McMinnville, he reduced the department’s overtime by 90 percent within 60 days of starting, according to [his application](#) with Powder Springs. He also established the city’s first community policing program.

Sewell led the department through state accreditation, making it one of the first two law enforcement agencies in Tennessee to be accredited by the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police.

He has worked as an adjunct professor in the criminal justice programs of Clayton State University in Georgia and Motlow State Community College in Tennessee. He enjoys golf, long-distance bicycling, exploring old towns, buildings and caves, canoeing, jogging and competitively cooking barbecue, his application says.

Sewell writes in his application: “I have a personal philosophy of policing that encompasses two fronts: customer service and representation. Every person that a police officer comes in contact (with) is a customer, and excellent customer service is a tantamount to professional law enforcement. Secondly, police officers are often the only city representative that citizens contact. Therefore, police officers are the city. This means that every officer in the department must be a liaison between the city government and its citizens.”

The former chief, L. Rick Richardson, was [fired on Feb. 9](#) after being on paid leave since late November.

[Richardson's termination letter](#) said he authorized the sale of two surplus police cars for an undervalued amount directly to the Braswell Police Department in 2007 instead of putting them up for auction, which was required by law of the surplus vehicles. Vaughn later said there was a third car involved.

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[rick townsend](#)

12:28 pm on Sunday, July 10, 2011

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4:35 pm on Sunday, September 18, 2011

Chief Sewell was the WRONG choice!! Morale is at an all time low. The Mayor and City Council could have picked a strong leader, but instead they picked a chief who will not even wear an uniform. The officer's do not respect him and McMinville is glad to get rid of him. What a terrible waste.

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