

## ORCHARD PARK MAY LET GO POLICE OFFICERS



### Town of Orchard Park

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More layoffs may be coming to municipal workers in the state of New York. The city of Orchard Park did manage to narrowly avoid the layoff of police officers for now, under the newly adopted 2012 budget, but sadly, that does not mean that they will not happen this year. If you're wondering how it is that came to be, then settle in. This story has a few twists and turns, and you have to stay with each of them if you want to understand how some of the officers jobs are still in the balance. It all began last month. On that day Police Chief Andrew Benz was given a directive by the budget managers for the town. He had to cut just about \$300,000 from his department's budget. In order to do that Chief Benz realized that he would need to cut staff. The jobs on the chopping block included not filling two of the vacant positions the city had slated and removing three of the existing officers from the city's payroll. The city's budget will keep those officers on the payroll for this year, provided that the money goes where it is supposed to. You see the funds that were approved were not moved directly into the police budget. Instead they were moved into a separate account that is under the control of the Town Board. The layoffs still loom because of that fact. While the city and police officers union are currently in negotiations over their contract. So basically, if the town does not like what it sees in the contract negotiations, there is a good chance that they will not release the funds. If they do not release the funds than the city will not hire on two officers, and will let go of three other officers in order to balance the budget for the police department. Wayne Drescher, the town's accountant, had this to say to a reporter for the Buffalo News about the funds, "The Town Board will determine if it is appropriate to reinstate all those dollars." Of course, every time there is a budget cut to civil servants there is the public to deal with. The police union made it a point to organize a demonstration outside of the municipal center roughly two weeks ago during which some of the cities residents spoke in support of police and against the cuts to the budget. During the budget meeting on Wednesday night the officers lined the walls of the meeting. This is not the first time that this has happened in the city of Orchard Park. In 2006 the city did not want to refill three open positions because the town did not believe that it could afford to pay for the salaries, benefits and retirement costs of the new officers. After some board members protested the move and the police union filed a lawsuit about the decision the board decided to reverse it and absorb the costs of the officers in order to resolve the issue.

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