



TOWN OF NEWTOWN
BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS

MINUTES FROM THE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING HELD TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2012
IN THE MEETING ROOM OF TOWN HALL SOUTH
3 MAIN STREET, NEWTOWN

**These minutes are not finalized until approved
At the next regularly scheduled meeting.*

Chairman Paul Mangiafico called the special meeting to order at 6:30pm.

PRESENT: Brian Budd, James Viadero, Joel Faxon, Andrew Sachs, and Paul Mangiafico.

ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT: Police Chief Michael Kehoe, Captain Jose Rios, Police Union President Scott Ruszczyk, Dr. James McCabe, 1 member of the press, 2 members of the public, and 7 members of the Union.

PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION ON DIAGNOSTIC REPORT OF THE NDPS (6:30 PM START) - Dr. James McCabe was invited by the Board of Police Commissioners to give his diagnostic report of the Newtown Department of Police Services and answer any questions. Several members of the Police Union as well as Union President Scott Ruszczyk were in attendance.

According to Dr. McCabe, his study was comprised of two phases: a survey and focus group. Survey - He reported that the survey involved a Job Diagnostic Survey and Demographic Survey. Dr. McCabe noted that the survey came back with a 58% to 59% overall satisfaction. He noted that feedback from the agents, security satisfaction, and meaningful work accounted for 68% of the overall satisfaction.

Focus Group - Dr. McCabe stated that he opened the focus group with the question, "How can your job be improved?" and it led to a 3 hour conversation resulting in a series of recommendations.

Chairman Mangiafico stated that he had read the report and it was very comprehensive.

Commissioner Budd agreed that the report was very comprehensive and noted that the biggest problem according to the study appeared to be the review process. He asked Dr. McCabe if he had an idea about what could be done differently.

Dr. McCabe explained that the one idea that came up very high was meaningful work. He suggested that anyway to include them more in the evaluation process would be appreciated. Dr. McCabe suggested addressing the question what the job is from the Chief and the Captain's perspective and the laborers perspective. He noted that the instrument becomes dialogue about what was good and what was bad. McCabe added that subjectivity must be eliminated as much as possible.

Commissioner Budd noted that even if you do come up with parameters – you have three shifts with differences in diagnostics shift to shift. Dr. McCabe agreed and noted that there should be one set of overall performance standards and then other sets pertaining to the individual shifts. Commissioner Faxon asked Dr. McCabe to select three things he would change in order to see improvement in the operation of the department.

Dr. McCabe stressed that Communication was the key and suggested that anything that can be done to improve it is a step in the right direction. He also suggested that an Informal Labor Management Committee be formed to resolve issues important to all the parties involved.

Commissioner Sachs asked Dr. McCabe what the contributing factors were for the department to arrive at this overall status. Dr. McCabe indicated that it was primarily the result of a breakdown in communication, but was quick to note that this was not just a problem in this Police Department. He explained that they got there through head banging between the labor union and management. Dr. McCabe noted that some of the labors major complaints were an overall mistrust, lack of supervision, and lack of trained supervisors.

Chairman Mangiafico indicated that throughout the report he was surprised by the degree of dissatisfaction and asked Dr. McCabe why he didn't elicit a response from the command structure. Dr. McCabe informed the Chairman that he did offer the opportunity for the command structure to respond but they waved the opportunity indicating it was ok and to continue.

The Chairman questioned whether that was the case even if an issue was raised that the command structure believed wasn't true and Dr. McCabe said yes.

Commissioner Budd suggested eliminating the 80/20 rule indicating that however well intentioned, it was causing problems. Dr. McCabe agreed that it has its place but suggested it's time to move on and find a more mutually agreeable process.

Chairman Mangiafico noted that in a number of instances reference was made as to the officers' reluctance to express their true feelings. Dr. McCabe noted that it was normal absolutely. He suggested that the level of mistrust was disconcerting to him. He noted that it was the mechanism they created to return the surveys. Dr. McCabe indicated the Chief said he would collect them but added that the concern seemed to be that he (Dr. McCabe) would never get them.

Dr. McCabe assured Police Commissioners that Newtown was a great Town, had a great Police Department, great people and he commended the command and the Board for taking a bold step to identify the improvement opportunities.

Commissioner Budd noted the positives: the labor provided feedback and there was a high level of pride in their work. He added that it was very credible to the Department to have such high overall task significance.

Chairman Mangiafico stated that he doesn't consider this report bad news, but rather considers it information the Board needs to know.

McCabe told the Board they should be commended for taking these steps.

Chairman Mangiafico asked if the issues were more related to smaller communities and Dr. McCabe said not so. Dr. McCabe added that in bigger agencies these would be considered positive results. He noted that there was a town in Colorado that had these results times 10 and was half the size of Newtown and that there was a Town in Tennessee where there were no medical or retirement benefits.

Commissioner Faxon asked if there was a template they could follow with respect to other departments that have dealt with this and asked of this has been dealt with successfully. Dr. McCabe cautioned Police Commissioners that not all the circumstances are the same.

Chairman Mangiafico asked Dr. McCabe if he thought there was a breakdown in communication between the Board of Police Commissioners and the work force. Dr. McCabe responded that there didn't seem to be a breakdown between the work force and the Board but suggested that opening up dialogue would be advantageous.

The Chairman thanked Dr. McCabe on behalf of the Board of Police Commissioners and the Town for doing a wonder job and providing them with a very thorough report, and said he hopes to contact him at some point in time when they have made progress.

Union President Ruszczyk thanked Dr. McCabe on behalf of the Union and suggested that Dr. McCabe come back two or three years in the future to see if his recommendations have been implemented.

ADJOURN THE MEETING: Commissioner Faxon moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 pm. Commissioners Sachs seconded and the motion unanimously carried.

Ted Swigart, Clerk