



TOWN OF NEWTOWN
BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS

MINUTES FROM THE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING HELD TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2013
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POLICE SERVICES MEETING ROOM
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 pm.

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

ABSENT: none

ALSO PRESENT: Police Chief Michael Kehoe, Police Captain Jose Rios, Police Union President Scott Ruszczyk, 1 members of the press, and 6 members of the public

**DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
INCREASED PUBLIC SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE NEWTOWN POLICE
DEPARTMENT RELATED TO RECENT PUBLIC SAFETY INCIDENTS AND ITS
IMPACT ON THE 13-14 FY BUDGET:**

Chairman Mangiafico reminded those in attendance that the Board of Police Commissioners finalized their prior to December 14. He noted that they can't change the budget because it has already been submitted. The Chairman indicated that the Board of Selectmen understood this. He added that they had advised the Board of Selectman and Legislative Council about what's coming down the road and the costs.

Chief Kehoe gave Board members a handout addressing the costs associated with hiring a new police officer, a civilian and costs for a new cruiser. He stated that they had determined the costs to hire a new officer and went over the length of time it would take.

The Chief informed the Board that the total process takes 9 to 12 months. He indicated that the hiring process alone takes 4 or 5 months, the academy is another 5 months, and then the training outside the academy takes another 3 to 4 months.

According to Chief Kehoe, even if the department were to hire an officer from another department the process would take two or three months - finding an officer who fits the community and the officer taking part in a 2 to 4 week training period.

The Chief told the Board that the department would not hire new SROs but rather a new hire would be hired to replace an officer that became an SRO.

Chairman Mangiafico noted that the Board does not have the authorization to say if they are going to place an officer in a School as an SRO, but rather must rely on a decision of the Board of Education and the Town. He added that they might elect to do something other than this.

Chief Kehoe indicated that if an individual is hired as an SRO they are basically a guest in the school and their roles there are greater than an officer. He added that the department needs to work with the school to do this.

Chairman Mangiafico reminded those in attendance that the discussion they were having was based on the assumption the Board of Education wants to expand the SRO program into the other schools.

Chief Kehoe added that he believes that is what the Board of Education did last Thursday.

Costs - According to Chief Kehoe, the starting salary of a new officer is \$81,204 which includes the costs estimated costs of FICA (\$3,880), Pension (\$8,113), Life Insurance (\$200), Medical (\$18,000) and LTD (\$225). He noted that additional estimated costs included a New Uniform (\$5,000), a Uniform Allowance (\$1,200), and Holiday Pay (\$4,000) bringing the overall estimated total costs of a new hire officer to \$91,404. Chief Kehoe noted that the recruitment costs are \$15,000 and the stipend for each School Resource Officer (SRO) is \$1,250.

Chief Kehoe stated that they are looking for grant money and money in kind to do that and suggested they were exploring all avenues.

Chairman Mangiafico reminded the fellow commissioners that they should not be concerned with where the money is coming from but rather with what is the right thing to do.

Commissioner Faxon asked that when an SRO is deployed at the school do they have a department vehicle and Chief Kehoe indicated that sometimes the vehicles are unmarked.

Commissioner Faxon asked the Chief what the expectation of the need was and if they could go to the school without a cruiser. Chief Kehoe said yes, but indicated he would rather they have a car so it is seen in the parking lot.

Commissioner Faxon agreed with the Chief that the full effect is for an SRO to have a marked car.

Chief Kehoe informed the Board that the \$33,600 cost for an additional police cruiser was based on the new Chevy. He noted that number was a conservative number as there were additional costs.

Commissioner Faxon stated that he had noticed that there were police cruisers marked and unmarked in Town from other towns and asked the Chief if Newtown was temporarily paying per diem for officers from other towns. Chief Kehoe told Commissioner Faxon that the department can no longer staff private duty jobs with the health issues and multiple jobs at the schools.

Commissioner Budd asked if they fulfilled all the schools needs, how many officers would be needed Monday through Friday. Chief Kehoe replied that was a good question and suggested that if there was one in every school 10 officers would be needed. He added that with current staffing they have a minimum of 6 to 7 on the road per day Monday through Friday.

According to the Chief, the Department is already challenged from losing 2 officers over the last several years plus those out on medical leaves, etc.

Captain Rios agreed indicating that what took place at Sandy Hook has been taxed by mental health issues, PTSD and other issues. He noted that they may have 2 officers out or as many as 7 which forces the rest of the department to pick up the slack. The Captain added that a lot of Over-Time is being incurred including OT at the schools.

Commissioner Faxon asked what the normal staffing levels were for a department in a town of their size. Captain Rios indicated that the FBI suggests there should be 2 to 2.4 officers per 1,000 residents. He noted that Newtown has 28,000 residents so they are looking at a minimum of 56 officers in all ranks. The Captain stated they currently have 45.

Commissioner Faxon asked if there were any recommendations in particular for optimal minimal staffing levels. Chief Kehoe noted that the average amount of officers per 1,000 for communities between 25,000 and 40,000 is 1.8 officers.

Commissioner Budd suggested that Newtown is well below that right now.

Chairman Mangiafico stated that they are understaffed no matter how you look at it.

Commissioner Faxon reminded those in attendance that the 45 officers were inclusive of the 5 to 7 officers who are out.

Captain Rios stated that they have already made a commitment to the school system with 3 SROs before the incident in Sandy Hook. He added that they are now asking to increase security and indicates they clearly have to respond to what their community needs.

Chairman Mangiafico reminded fellow Police Commissioners that when they look at providing SROs they have to look at non-public schools as well. He noted that they can recommend it but those schools don't have to accept it.

Chief Kehoe agreed and suggested that they meet with each of the Boards who make the decisions for those schools to see if their needs are for security or an SRO.

The Chief indicated that the SROs were a better option for the schools as opposed to a patrol officer because of their additional training and familiarity with the students and the teachers.

Chairman Mangiafico recommended that they need to include those non-public schools in their numbers and that they should treat all of the schools the same.

Captain Rios agreed and suggested the sentiment out there was that they want SROs and that they want the same protection as children in public schools.

Chairman Mangiafico asked fellow Board members what this meant in terms of numbers and suggested that should have 56 positions and they have 45 so they are short 11. He added that of those 11, 7 came out to be hired for the schools, which leaves them with a net gain of 4. The Chairman added that when they look at 5 or 6 officers not working they are back in the negative position again.

Union President Scott Ruszczuk believes that in regards to SROs versus regular police officers, SROs are necessary to teach DARE classes where regular officers could provide the security needs.

Chief Kehoe suggests that at minimum they need to fill 6 positions - 3 in public schools and 3 in parochial/private schools. Chairman Mangiafico recommended that they ask for 7 positions - 4 in public schools and 3 in parochial/private schools.

Commissioner Budd reminded the board that based on the FBI's minimum of 2 officers per 1,000 residents, 56 needs to be the goal.

Chairman Mangiafico stated that the minimum number they should be requesting is 11 and Commissioner Faxon agreed.

Chief Kehoe reminded the Board that the SROs are at the schools only for school days and added that obviously they work more than that.

Chairman Mangiafico said that he could see the need for officers will expand and suggested that the schools may want a presence at all activities.

Commissioner Sachs noted that if they looked at the FBI's suggestion of 2.4 officers per 1,000 residents they would need closer to 67 to 68 officers.

Commissioner Budd said he thinks 56 is a good number suggesting that they can staff schools and have enough to conduct day to day business. He added that getting 11 officers trained and ready by this time next year is a monumental task.

Commissioner Faxon warned fellow commissioners that if they budget for the positions, there are some grants they can't acquire. He suggested that they budget for some positions and go to a government entity to ask for money for others.

Chairman Mangiafico stressed that they should be promoting what they believe is needed.

Commissioners all agreed that the number of positions needed is 11.

In regards to the needs of the Department, Commissioner Faxon stated that he thinks 11 is a very conservative request and that 11 doesn't even get back to December 13, 2012. The

Commissioner suggests they make the offer to the non-public schools and that by adding 11

officers they will get back to some level of sanity. He added that this will be a phased 12-15 month process.

Chairman Mangiafico told commissioners that they are not asking to change the budget. He indicated that the Police Department agrees on 11 positions and it that be done now, but noted that the cost of the 11 positions will come to over \$1 million.

The Chairman then asked about the cars for the SROs.

Chief Kehoe stated that the cars used for the schools can be utilized at other times and outfitted so they can be used for patrol. He stressed that they need to maximize the use of the cars for use inside and outside the schools. The Chief added that they need to look at a car for an SRO and every other detail they have.

Chairman Mangiafico addressed the fact that each cruiser costs approximately \$33,600 and questioned how many would be needed. Chief Kehoe indicated that for the 11 new positions they would need 3 or 4 more cars.

The Chairman noted that they need 11 officers and 4 cars; and then asked the Chief about the civilian positions needed.

Chief Kehoe noted that they had two out right now which creates a back log; and suggested that the Department can always use more civilian staff.

Commissioner Budd asked the Chief if they asked for the 1 civilian position back, that was cut, would it be sufficient, and Chief Kehoe said yes.

Chief Kehoe reminded the Board that if they increase the staff they must also increase the structure of the staff and do it methodically. He noted that the currently have volunteers coming in to help. The Chief added that the work load has increased; and the just the number of pistol permits alone have doubled over the last 5 years.

Chairman Mangiafico reminded the Board that they are now asking for 11 new police officers, 4 new vehicles and 1 civilian employee. He noted that these numbers could change in the future and could even go down.

Captain Rios reminded the Chairman that the numbers could also go up as some citizens are asking for 2 officers in each school.

Commissioner Faxon stated that he would be comfortable saying these numbers were a minimum.

Commissioner Sachs noted that this would be a \$120 annual household increase in taxes. He added that the Town has spoken on a large scale that they support it.

Chairman Mangiafico recommended that they make it known they don't know where the money is coming from. The Chairman asked Chief Kehoe to rework the sheet with the numbers and stated that he will write a letter to the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance, the Legislative Council, and send a copy to the Board of Education.

Commissioner Viadero moved to add 11 sworn personnel positions, 1 civilian position, and 4 vehicles, inclusive of all of the costs associated. Commissioner Faxon seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Cynthia Iaropoli, Equestrian Ridge, President of the Head O' Meadow PTA, said they voted in favor of having police in the school; and said she will fully support all measures by the police and security and will advocate passing budgets to do so.

Chairman Mangiafico told Mrs. Iaropoli that they were not changing the budget but rather submitting it as it was. He also informed her that the First Selectman was waiting for a recommendation from the Board.

Michelle Hankin, Greenleaf Farms Road, thanked Police Commissioners for their dedication and for doing a spectacular job. She told the Board that they were all in favor of armed officers in the

schools. Mrs. Hankin suggested that they were asking for 2 armed officers, minimum per school. She noted that as they go forward, she hopes they outline that the parents are behind the schools, the Police Department and the Town to do what they need to do. Mrs. Hankin suggested that this was a critical time to invest back into their Town. She told the Board to give them a fact sheet as to why they need their increases. Mrs. Hankin noted that the Board will have a huge increase on their line but suggested that the people will pay for it. She suggested that they do have some deficits but said it sounds like the Board can't be on the low end of staffing. Mrs. Hankin noted that the Union President had mentioned the armed officers vs. the SROs and asked the Board if they could clarify their goals.

Chief Kehoe told Mrs. Hankin that an officer would secure an entry point often temporarily whereas an SRO may occupy a position for awhile, would be in the classrooms, would get to know the kids and would be more integrated into the school.

Mrs. Hankin suggested they could have one of each and asked if the positions were fulltime. Commissioner Faxon stated that an SRO would be devoted to the school when in session and then have other duties. Chief Kehoe added that they would spend 75% of the time with the schools.

Chairman Mangiafico reminded Mrs. Hankin that the 3 SROs aren't covered by the schools now, but noted that regardless of where the money comes from residents still cover the costs.

Mrs. Hankin asked if there was a way of pulling officers out of retirement. Chief Kehoe said that anything was possible.

Commissioner Budd noted that if an individual is retired three years or more they have to go back to the PD and go through the training. He noted that out of 10, 1 to 3 will make it through background issue.

Dave Barzetti, Beaver Dam Road, told the Board that he has a 5-year old at Head O' Meadow School and agrees with getting officers in there. However, he questioned whether they could look at a private sector security company for less of a cost. Mr. Barzetti noted that people want guards for 180 days of the year and suggests that's really what parents want.

Chief Kehoe stated that an armed security guard is for safety alone; where as a police officer has a greater authority and can make an arrest, they can take action when others can't, they are well paid, and they are well trained.

Commissioner Budd told Mr. Barzetti that security contracts are often awarded to the lowest bidder and you usually get what you pay for. He added that with a security company they won't get the continuity of the having the same officer there every day. Commissioner Budd noted that with an SRO he will get to know the staff and who the parents are.

Commissioner Viadero said that he would opt towards a police officer with their training.

Commissioner Faxon agreed stating that they can't skimp on protection of our children.

Commissioner Sachs suggested that the quality of one well trained police officer might trump 2 well trained security officers.

Mr. Barzetti suggests that the security officers could be a back-up.

Commissioner Faxon questioned whether it may be different for an armed security guard to carry a gun in a school and suggested that laws might have to be changed to do that and he doesn't support that.

Edward Shanley, 7 Little Brook Lane, told Chief Kehoe that the Police Department is excellent and commended the commissioners who serve on the Board for nothing. Mr. Shanley said that they need to get voters out there and call the people. He added that they need to educate people and remind them they get what they pay for.

Chief Kehoe thanked Mr. Shanley for his kind words.

Jim Sullivan, Lincoln Road, asked the Board what the current coverage was at the Middle School and Reed Intermediate School.

Chief Kehoe informed Mr. Sullivan that the School Security Committee was looking at each individual school. He noted that each school poses different security problems and that they need to look at each one's needs as well as what personnel need to be put on site. The Chief noted that 3 SROs have already been embedded in the schools and suggests that they will become part of the overall security plan. Finding no other public participation, Chairman Mangiafico thanked the residents for coming out.

ADJOURNMENT: Commissioner Faxon moved to adjourn. Commissioner Sachs seconded the motion was unanimously approved at 7:38 pm.

Ted Swigart, Clerk