

OLD SAYBROOK POLICE COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
March 26, 2012
MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, March 26, 2012, at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

Present: Chairman Burnham, Vice Chairman Metsack, Commissioners Winkler, Sparaco and Finch were also present. Commissioner Dunlap attended the meeting via teleconference. Chief Spera and Lieutenant Roche were also present from the Department of Police Services.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.

II. Minutes

A. February 27, 2012 Regular Meeting

A motion was made by Commissioner Finch to approve the February 27, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sparaco.

Commissioner Finch directed the Commission to page 5, paragraph 3 of the February 27, 2012 minutes and stated that he had received information from the Old Saybrook Ambulance Association that last month's average response time for "hot" and "cold" runs was 11 minutes and not the stated 15-20 minutes. Chief Spera said that he explained that the numbers from the meeting minutes were not meant to be a reflection on the service provided by the Old Saybrook ambulance, but was given as more of a general statement about the average time it takes for all ambulance responses to Old Saybrook. He stated as an example there was a call several weeks ago that took an ambulance more than 40 minutes to arrive on scene. This response, while not the response of the Old Saybrook Ambulance Association, is included in the average time it takes for an ambulance to arrive on scene in Old Saybrook. The Chief further added that the Old Saybrook Ambulance Association are true partners in public safety with the Police Department.

The motion to approve the February 27, 2012 minutes passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against. Vice Chairman Metsack was not yet present for this vote.

III. Comments from the Public

There were no comments from the public.

IV. Executive Reports

A. Financial

1. 11-12 Operating / Contractual Budgets

Commissioner Finch asked for an explanation about the expenditures in the First Responder Medical Equipment line item. Chief Spera responded that this line item is used to provide any and all medical supplies needed to provide medical assistance to those in need. He mentioned that this year there has been a need to replace more

defibrillator batteries than normal and the batteries cost approximately \$500.00 each. Chief Spera continued in saying that the department has attempted to find generic batteries for less cost but he has found that the generic brands do not have the five year shelf life that the brand name batteries have.

Commissioner Dunlap inquired about the status and uses of the Police Commission line item. He stated that it was his understanding that Police Commission meeting packets were prepared from this line item but the Police Commission budget had not yet been expended at all. Chairman Burnham explained that the Police Commission line item in the operating budget is reserved for any costs incurred by the Police Commission such as professional police commission memberships. Chief Spera further clarified that the Police Commission line item is used to pay for professional police commission memberships, materials required to create meeting packets, and any professional services, other than legal, that the Commission chooses to retain during the fiscal year. He further explained that the paper used for the packets was currently being deducted from the Office Supplies line item to keep the Police Commission line item from incurring any costs.

Commissioner Dunlap asked Chief Spera about the status of the three contractual line items that are 0% encumbered. Chief Spera responded that those line items will most likely be expended by the end of the year fiscal year. Payments for these line items are incurred at the end of the fiscal year rather than at the beginning like other contractual items.

Commissioner Finch asked what the Collect System is. Chief Spera answered that it is the interface the Department uses to perform on the job tasks such as running license plates, license numbers and to perform wanted person checks. The system itself is run by the state of Connecticut.

2. 12-13 Budget Process

Chief Spera reported that the budget process is currently underway and that he was present at the first public hearing to answer any questions about the Police Department budget and that there were none. Chief Spera also reported that the next Board of Finance meeting to discuss the budget would be held on April 3rd. Chief Spera asked Chairman Burnham if he should approach the Board of Finance about posting the meeting as a joint meeting so that all Police Commissioners could attend without being accused of holding an illegal meeting. Chairman Burnham replied that she believed it was a good idea. Chief Spera continued by reporting that the health care numbers were coming in better than expected but was still a jump from what had been budgeted for the fiscal year. Chief Spera again voiced his displeasure with the practice of funding through the use of off budget accounts. Specifically the Chief pointed to policing for community events coming from the Traffic Safety Fund. He also reminded the Commission that police officers who work these events only collect straight time wages regardless of their weekly payroll calculations. Chief Spera added that the Board of Finance had expressed concerns about the transparency of that part of the Police Budget and would like to see what the budget looks like with the funding for policing community events added back into the operating budget. Chief Spera concluded by saying that the First Selectman had proposed efficiencies that would help all municipal departments save money and that many of his suggestions had already been looked into and/or adopted by the police department. Chief Spera also said that he looks forward to working with the First Selectman in regards to implementing these efficiencies town wide. Chairman Burnham shared the Chief's enthusiasm for streamlining the budgeting process but also expressed her displeasure with the continued miscommunication in regards to the community events. She continued by saying that there must be a better way to explain that the events have not been cancelled, the Police Commission simply found a better way to pay for policing them this year to ease the burden on the local tax payer. Chief Spera

reminded the Commission that this strategy of taking money out of the Traffic Safety Fund is not meant to be a long term solution. Commissioner Finch suggested that a notation be made in the budget explaining how the community events would be funded. Chief Spera agreed that something like this might be helpful but the exact notation would have to be approved by the Selectman's Office. Chief Spera agreed that something should be done to prevent the public from getting the wrong impression about the Police Department budget.

3. Asset Forfeiture

Account Balance is \$20,396.51

4. Capital Sinking Fund

Account Balance is \$56,840.82

Chief Spera informed the Commission that new digital cameras for the new police vehicles would be deducted from this account as the vehicles begin to be outfitted.

5. Traffic Safety Fund

Account Balance is \$38,998.51

Chief Spera informed the Commission that he would be coming to them in the near future about purchasing one or two new radar units. He reported that the last time a radar unit was budgeted for was in 2008-2009. He concluded that he would go out to bid for the radar units and come back to the Commission with his recommendations.

6. Law Enforcement Fund

Account Balance is \$46,393.75

Chief Spera reported that he had communicated with Vice Chairman Metsack and that a meeting was scheduled for April 4th at 6:00PM with the other members of the committee to begin discussing how to utilize the funds. Commissioner Finch asked about the intention of the Committee and whether or not the fund would be closed once the money was expended. Chairman Burnham responded that once the funds are expended, the fund will be closed. She added that all expenditures must be reported to the Attorney General but the funds could be used on whatever the committee deemed appropriate.

Commissioner Finch asked where donations to the Police Department go. Chairman Burnham replied that donations go into the Old Saybrook Police Fund. Chief Spera added that general donations go into the Old Saybrook Police Fund, however, when donators specify a specific use for their donation, monies are deposited in their respective off budget account.

Commissioner Finch asked if the D.A.R.E program operates solely on donations. Chief Spera responded that all expenses for D.A.R.E are paid for through donations with the exception of police officer personnel expenses.

7. Old Saybrook Police Fund

Account Balance is \$255.00

8. Police Explorer Fund

Account Balance is \$4,770.27

Chief Spera assured the Commission that he had no plans to spend any of the money from the Police Explorer line item and that next year's program will be funded solely through donations.

B. Administrative

1. Contract Negotiations Update – Dispatch Union

Chief Spera reported that the last two sessions were canceled. The first meeting was cancelled due to scheduling conflicts. The second meeting was cancelled because of Department wide training for dispatchers that could not be rescheduled. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, March 30. The Chief expressed that each side has had time to review proposals and he believes the next meeting will be a productive working session.

2. New Vehicle – Update

Chief Spera reported that the first new sedan has been delivered. We will begin to evaluate through employee input where various equipment will be installed. Once the remained two new sedans arrive, all three will be delivered to Whelen to be outfitted. The new Explorer is currently at Whelen, having equipment installed.
Patrolman Miller Update

Chief Spera reported that Patrolman Miller is still recovering and is hoping for her return to full duty sometime in early to mid-June.

3. Patrolman DeLima – POST Graduation

Lieutenant Roche informed the Commission that Patrolman DeLima had graduated from the Police Academy and that a ceremony was held on Tuesday, April 20th. Patrolman DeLima has begun working on the required 400 hours of on the job training. His current Field Training Officer is Detective Perrotti. The process takes about 10 weeks with the Patrolman beginning with policy work and becoming acclimated to the town. Lieutenant Roche added that the new CAD system will help Patrolman DeLima become familiar with the town more quickly. Chairman Burnham asked how the CAD system knows the difference between roads with the same name but are located in different areas of town. Lieutenant Roche and Chief Spera both emphasized the role of the dispatchers, distinguishing where the service is needed and relaying that information correctly to the officers. Commissioner Finch stated that Patrolman DeLima should be online around June 1st. Lieutenant Roche confirmed that date. Chairman Burnham asked if Patrolman DeLima would stay with the same Field Training Officer for the entire 400 hours of training. Lieutenant Roche explained that Patrolman DeLima would begin and end with Detective Perrotti but would spend time with other officers to observe alternative methods of police work and approaches to various problems. Commissioner Dunlap commented that when he met Patrolman DeLima he was working with Patrolman Walsh. Lieutenant Roche responded that the initial Field Training Officer was not available that day so Patrolman DeLima was reviewing youth policies with Patrolman Walsh. Chief Spera added that all new patrolmen spend two to three days with youth service officers and are required to pass a test on youth service policies.

V. Legal Traffic Authority Business

A. Otter Cove Speed Limit Sign Review

Chief Spera reported that he investigated the speed limit sign issue in Otter Cove and noticed that the majority of the signage were 25 MPH limits but that one sign was a 20 MPH limit. He said that traditionally there is one sign at the beginning and the end of each road but he feels that a few additional signs could be added in select areas. Chief Spera then requested that the Commission allow him to go to the Otter Cove Association and recommend areas for new signage and also a uniform speed limit be established for the entire area. Commissioner Finch commented that residents should keep in mind that all citizens will be held to any new imposed speed limits, not just those who reside outside the Otter Cove area. Chief Spera added that at some point he would like to study the signage throughout Old Saybrook and determine how to streamline speed limits throughout the town. Chairman Burnham concluded that was reasonable for the Chief to meet with the Otter Cove Association about new signage and possibly a change in the area's speed limit. She also noted that the Commission will field a recommendation from the Chief about any possible changes prior to taking any action

VI. Field Operations - Reports

A. Activity Report

1. February 23, 2012 – March 21, 2012

Chief Spera reported that the Police Department had had a very busy weekend with 4 or 5 arrests being made on Friday night alone. He again reiterated that the majority of the problems caused have been caused by members of other communities.

B. Emergency Communication Center – EMD Accreditation

Chief Spera announced that the National Academy of Emergency Dispatch had performed their field evaluation regarding 21 different points for site accreditation. Following the review of our application and site visit, the Town of Old Saybrook Department of Police Services Emergency Communications Center became the 115th accredited dispatch center worldwide out of 2,800 centers that use the same system. Chief Spera reminded the Commission of the difficulty to achieve this level of performance. Each call that required medical assistance was listened to, reviewed and scored. The culminated team scores were measured against a national standard. Additionally, the accreditation process requires medical oversight, which was provided by the medical director from Middlesex Hospital. To ensure accuracy, part of the application packet required the Department to submit to the National Academy of Dispatch actual recordings of 911 calls to be reviewed by an independent person. Chief Spera added that this accreditation separates Old Saybrook from every other team in the state. There are only two other centers in the state of Connecticut with this level of accreditation from the National Academy of Dispatch and neither of them are 911 service centers. The Chief reminded the Commission, however, that accreditation does not end here and this level of excellence must be maintained to keep the high level of accreditation. Dispatcher Shake added that he and all the other dispatchers are extremely pleased with their achievement. He said that it means a lot to him knowing that his group is held to a higher standard and that many other dispatching centers are simply not willing to put in the work necessary to accomplish what they have accomplished. He concluded that this accreditation will help Old Saybrook deliver a higher level of service that will ultimately help save lives. He finished in saying that, "A challenge was put in front of us and we took the ball and ran with it." Chairman Burnham acknowledged that the accreditation

process typically takes about 18 months and that Old Saybrook did it in about 6 months. She praised the dispatchers for their hard work and their dedication to public service for the Town of Old Saybrook. Chief Spera added that dispatching is often the overlooked component of public service but that the dispatchers are the only link between the people who need help and the people who can provide help. Vice Chairman Metsack asked how often Old Saybrook would be reviewed by the accreditation board. Chief Spera replied that there would be another site visit in three years, however, a report of dispatching scores must be sent every three months to maintain site accreditation. After one report of unsatisfactory scores, an action plan must be submitted. After two poor reports, the site enters into a probationary period and after three poor reports the site loses its accreditation. The Chief concluded, however, that now that the goal has been achieved, the dispatchers know it can be maintained. He acknowledged that with the training of several new part time dispatchers there might be some small bumps in the road but he believes that the staff will again rise to the challenge.

VII. Discuss and Act on Golf Cart Registration Fees for the 2012 Season

Chief Spera reported that Executive Secretary Trent Gerbers had submitted a proposal for this year's program that introduced a number of new initiatives aimed at making the program more efficient and cost effective. One such change will be the addition of an online renewal process. He also noted that it was the Commission's responsibility to determine registration fees and that he recommended last year's rates be maintained. All revenue brought in from the registration is deposited into the Traffic Safety Fund. Chairman Burnham asked where the money to fund the program comes from. Chief Spera responded that program expenses are taken from the Traffic Safety Fund.

Vice Chairman Metsack made a motion to charge \$25.00 for the registration of one golf cart, \$20.00 for a second cart and \$15.00 for a third cart. In addition, \$45.00 should be charged for a vanity plate. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Finch. The motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against.

VIII. Correspondence

Chief Spera explained that in late 2010, the Secretary of State issued local veterans citations for their past service to their country. The citations were handed out a ceremony held at the high school. The citations that were not able to be handed out during the ceremony were sent to Town Hall for delivery. Prior to the end of First Selectman Michael Pace's term, the Chief noticed that more than 300 of the veteran certificates were still sitting in a pile in Town Hall. Permission was granted for the Chief to take the certificates and devise a way to deliver them to the deserving veterans. The citations are currently being delivered by police personnel and will take approximately two to three weeks to completely distribute. Chief Spera said that he would share any thank you emails or letters at the next regular Police Commission meeting.

Chairman Burnham read the resignation letter sent by former Commissioner Zemienieski to Sara Backer in the Town Clerk's Office. She commented that he was an excellent member of the Police Commission and that he will be missed. Chief Spera added that he had sent an email to all Police Department staff about the resignation and he thanked Commissioner Zemienieski for his service to the Commission, the Town of Old Saybrook and the Department. Chief Spera asked if there was a mandated time frame for his replacement. Chairman Burnham responded that there was no mandated time frame in place but that a meeting was taking place on March 27th, 2012 of the Democratic Town Committee to discuss a possible replacement.

IX. Discussion of Ad Hoc Committee to Develop an Evaluation Instrument for the Chief of Police

Commissioner Finch reported that he had met with Commissioner Sparaco and Chief Spera about several different evaluation methods that had come from other departments. He reported that Clinton has no formal evaluation instrument and that they had received information from Madison and Stonington. Commissioner Finch said that the different evaluation methods were vastly different from one another with the most comprehensive method being the tool developed by Chief Spera for the sworn employees of the Old Saybrook Police Department. Commissioner Finch also added that he had received some information from Commissioner Dunlap about other methods of evaluation for state employees. He then asked Chairman Burnham what the sub committees charge is once all the information has been collected. Chairman Burnham asked for the committee to sort through the information and come back to the Commission with a recommendation about what tool should be used for the Chief of Police. She acknowledged that the tool would need to be adjusted to fit with the Chief's contract but a general proposal to the Commission would be the first step towards adopting an evaluation system for this Chief and any future Chiefs. Commissioner Finch reiterated that Old Saybrook's current evaluation tool is the most comprehensive and it is his recommendation at this time to modify this tool to fit with the Chief's contract. Chairman Burnham reminded Commissioner Finch that there is no time crunch for this project and that a formal evaluation of the Chief of Police has not been done for a number of years so they can start from scratch and build a new evaluation tool for the position.

X. Comments from the Public

A member of the public asked where she could get information about this year's golf cart program. Chairman Burnham replied that a state statute allows the program to be possible and that the Commission develops the rules for the program itself. All pertinent information can be found at the Police Department. Chief Spera added that information will also be made available this year on the new golf cart renewal website. Chief Spera also noted that golf cart users must be licensed drivers and can only go on roads with a speed limit of 25 MPH or less. He reminded that all driving infractions that can be incurred for the operation of motor vehicle can also be incurred in a golf cart. He concluded in saying that complaints about the golf cart program have gone down significantly from year to year.

A member of the public commented that it is ridiculous that town does not buy supplies in bulk with other departments. He also noted that it might be helpful to have other members of the police department conduct a review of the Chief as part of the evaluation tool. Chief Spera responded that he has had members of the Department submit anonymous comments about how the Chief is performing within his role in the past. Chief Spera added that there was a presentation that contained the comments that were submitted by the Department's personnel. Commissioner Finch asked if he could get a copy of that presentation. Chief Spera agreed to provide the presentation to Commissioner Finch and other members of the Evaluation committee.

XI. Comments from the Chief of Police

There were no comments from the Chief of Police

XII. Comments and/or Concerns from Commissioners

Commissioner Winkler asked what needed to be done to re-activate the building committee. Commissioner Finch responded that the committee is not meeting but allegedly there was something in the works and the problem had not been forgotten.

Chairman Burnham added that part of the problem is that once elections are completed, new officials are forced to jump immediately into the budget season so it takes time to catch up with pending issues. Chief Spera noted that the building committee should be a subcommittee of the Police Commission and it should consist of Police Commissioners, himself, presidents of the Police and Dispatch unions and a professional that could inspect various locations and make their recommendations. Commissioner Finch agreed and stated that the biggest problem was the new code for seismic activity in regards to what a police building can withstand. He continued that most already existing buildings do not meet those seismic requirements and it costs more to make the adjustments than to build a new facility. Chairman Burnham also mentioned that the problem is on a time constraint both because the current lease is running out and because the department is operating with a limited window for insurance safety violations. Chief Spera responded that Master Sergeant Rankin had been made the OSHA Compliance Officer for the Department and that OSHA had been invited to the Department for a voluntary audit. Chief Spera noted that the audit was being conducted so that any necessary corrective actions could be taken prior to a problem occurring which could lead to liability issues.

Vice Chairman Metsack stated that a meeting of the Law Enforcement Fund Committee would be held on April 4th but that the location had not yet been determined. Chairman Burnham asked that once the location and time had been finalized to post the information and an agenda on the town's website.

Commissioner Dunlap thanked Chief Spera and Master Sergeant Van der horst for his recent ride along and he commented that it was a valuable and informative experience.

Commissioner Dunlap asked that a manpower allocation workshop be developed by the Chief and shared with the Police Commission as soon as possible. Chief Spera responded that he intends to develop a workshop series that focuses on all the various areas within the Police Department. He also stated that he intends the series to begin sometime in the fall, near September. This will give each assigned officer an appropriate amount of time to put a comprehensive presentation together. The Chief stated following detailed presentations about the various functions of the Department, he intended to culminate the workshop series with a presentation on employee resource allocation. Commissioner Dunlap expressed his desire for the workshop series to conclude prior to the beginning of the next budget season and that he would like to see the already existing manpower presentation in the meantime. Chief Spera said that he would be happy to forward the presentation but that most of the information was no longer viable. He also stated that it would be up to the Commission to determine the frequency of the presentations. Commissioner Dunlap said he would let the Chief determine the schedule but he wants as much information as possible, as soon as possible. Commissioner Finch asked the Chief to prepare a list of the different presentations in the workshop series so the Commission could prioritize the order of the presentations and eliminate any that they feel are unnecessary. Chief Spera agreed to forward that list to the Commission at the next meeting.

XIII. Adjournment

A motion was made by Commissioner Finch to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Winkler. The motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against.

*The next regular Police Commission meeting is scheduled for April 23, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.
in the First Floor Conference Room, Old Saybrook Town Hall.*

The meeting minutes for March 26, 2012 were prepared and respectfully submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trent Gerbers', written over a horizontal line.

Trent Gerbers
Records Clerk for the Old Saybrook Police Commission