

**OLD SAYBROOK POLICE COMMISSION**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**July 23, 2012**  
**MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, July 23, 2012, at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

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

**I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Burnham called the meeting to order at 7:00PM and led the Police Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. Minutes**

A. June 25, 2012 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Dunlap noted that his position under those present at the meeting is listed as "Chairman" and should be changed to say "Commissioner".

Chief Spera noted that only motions and voting outcomes made during municipal meetings are required to be recorded for the meeting minutes, however, the minutes taken at the monthly Police Commission meetings were the most detailed of any municipal agency by far. Chief Spera added that the detail included in these minutes is important for the transparency of the Department.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Sparaco to approve the June 25, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Metsack. The motion to approve the June 25, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against. Commissioners Winkler and Finch were not present for this vote.**

**III. Comments from the Public**

A citizen from the public announced that her neighborhood was still experiencing problems with large tractor trailer trucks driving through her neighborhood and that the damage being caused by those trucks is starting to become noticeable as road conditions decay.

A citizen from the public who owns two properties on Maplewood Street emphasized the short term and long term economic impact that the large tractor trailer trucks could potentially have his neighborhood. He expressed that traditionally areas with the kind of traffic expected to accommodate large trucks draws a lower rent base. Overtime, this lower rent base could drive down property values in the entire area.

**IV. Executive Reports**

A. Financial

1. 12-13 Operating / Contractual Budgets

Chief Spera first reviewed the Expenses and Supplies totals with the Police Commission and explained that the reason the Heating Oil line item is already 57% expended is because the

Department chose to frontload their Heating Oil purchase, rather than paying for it monthly. Additionally, the Chief plans to frontload gasoline at \$3.01 per gallon but this purchase is currently delayed until the contract for the gasoline is finalized. Chief Spera then moved to the Contractual Budget Summary and made mention of the SBC Telephone System being 89% expended due to this line item's maintenance agreement being paid on July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

2. Asset Forfeiture

**Account Balance is \$20,770.11**

3. Capital Sinking Fund

**Account Balance is \$35,260.82**

4. Traffic Safety Fund

**Account Balance is \$43,740**

5. Law Enforcement Fund

**Account Balance is \$46,393.75**

Vice Chairman Metsack announced that the next meeting for this committee will be held on August 2, 2012 at 6:00PM in the small conference at the library.

6. Old Saybrook Police Fund

**Account Balance is \$320.00**

7. Police Explorer Fund

**Account Balance is \$4,770.27**

8. Police K-9 Fund

**Account Balance is \$1,170.00**

Chief Spera announced that money for this account will primarily come from fundraising and private donations. Chief Spera added that approximately \$800.00 had recently been raised for the program at a local art show and that another \$1,000.00 was being donated privately. Chief Spera concluded, however, that he was uncomfortable funding an essential piece of the Department through fundraisers and donations. He adamantly expressed his concern for this practice and does not feel it is appropriate to find alternative ways to provide core services to the public.

9. 11-12 Budget Status

Chief Spera reported that there is a discrepancy between the final numbers calculated within the Department and the final figures calculated by the town. Currently, the Department is showing a budget overrun of approximately \$11,000, while the Town shows a budget surplus of approximately \$300,000 for the Department. Both sides are currently working together to find a number that is unanimously agreed upon as correct. Chief Spera added that he will report his findings to the Commission at next month's meeting if the Town has come to a resolution on the matter.

## B. Administrative

### 1. Contract Negotiations Update –Dispatch Union

Chief Spera announced that there has been no progress made since the last meeting and he is disappointed that the process has not continued to move forward. The Chief added that he will continue to urge both sides to continue with the negotiation process so that a formal document can be adopted as quickly as possible.

### 2. New Vehicle – Update

Chief Spera informed the Commission that the Department was still waiting on new prisoner cages to come in for the vehicles. He reminded the Commission that the delay was due to a slight difference between the prototype vehicles and the actual vehicles that have led to certain essential pieces being unusable without modification. Chief Spera estimated that the vehicles should be ready for use in three and a half weeks. Chief Spera also made special mention of the work being done for the Department by Whelen and he expressed his gratitude for their efforts and for the money they are helping the Department save.

Chairman Burnham also expressed her gratitude towards Whelen and agreed to write a letter of appreciation to the company once the work on the new vehicles is completed.

### 3. Injured Employees Update

Chief Spera reported the Patrolman Miller is currently engaged in back to work program and should be an available asset by the end of next week. Chief Spera added that both in-house custodians are currently injured, which has led to members of the Department providing Building Maintenance services in addition to their responsibilities as a Police Officer. Chief Spera told the Commission that he is currently working with the First Selectman for a swift resolution to this problem and one should be available by the end of the week. Chief Spera concluded that it is upsetting that he has to use sworn personnel for Department upkeep and that it is unacceptable that he does not have the necessary support staff to address Department needs..

### 4. Employee Discipline

Chief Spera reminded the Commission of the dismissal of Dispatcher Goduti. Chief Spera cited violations of Section 4, Section 16 and Section 19 of the Uniform Standards of Conduct as reasons for the dismissal. Chief Spera added that a grievance has been filed by the Union on Dispatcher Goduti's behalf. The Union requested that all customary grievance steps be waived and the process move directly to mediation, however, the Town of Old Saybrook declined this request. Chief Spera also noted that he offered to meet with legal counsel for the Union to discuss the grievance, but it was not yet determined whether the meeting would take place.

### 5. Business Outreach Program

Chief Spera announced that the Business Outreach Program is almost ready to be launched and that currently a list of vendors and email addresses is being updated to make the program more effective.

### 6. Neighborhood Watch Program

Chief Spera announced that Patrolman Hackett has been appointed as the new head of the Neighborhood Watch Program and that he is currently drafting an agenda for a meeting to be held with all currently existing neighborhood watches.

## V. Legal Traffic Authority Business

## A. Maplewood/Oak/Elmwood/Pine Street Safety Enhancements

Chief Spera announced that he had done a thorough study of the neighborhood struggling with tractor trailer trucks utilizing narrow, residential streets. He asserted that through his study he believes that the residents of this area have a legitimate concern but also that the businesses along Main Street have a legitimate delivery need. **Therefore, Chief Spera recommended the following action be taken: No thru truck signs will be added at the intersection of Elmwood and Pine Street and at the intersection of Oak and Maplewood. Additionally, a second no parking sign will be added to the No Parking area near the Bank of America and the curb will be painted yellow to signify that there is no parking allowed. Finally, letters will go to local businesses explaining the need for the new No Thru Truck signs and that truck drivers should not use these streets for any purpose other than delivery.**

A citizen expressed their concern that this solution, while helpful, would not address trucks entering the neighborhood through Lynde Street.

Chief Spera responded that he believed the proposed recommendation will effectively stop any trucks that are simply passing through the area but he could not prevent local businesses from receiving deliveries.

Commissioner Stuart asked if it was possible to conduct a traffic survey for the area.

Chief Spera responded that the Department didn't have the resources to conduct such a survey. Chief Spera added that the Department had to be careful how they limited access to public roadways because denying access could lead to a loss of state and federal funding. It is also likely that denying or limiting access to public roadways would hurt local businesses.

Vice Chairman Metsack added that he believes the proposed recommendation will cut down on the number of tractor trailers utilizing the neighborhood as a shortcut and that the residents of the area will have to wait and see what happens once the signs go up.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Stuart to adopt the Chief's recommendation that No thru truck signs will be added at the intersection of Elmwood and Pine Street and at the intersection of Oak and Maplewood. Additionally, a second no parking sign will be added to the No Parking area near the Bank of America and the curb will be painted yellow to signify that there is no parking allowed. Finally, letters will go to local businesses explaining the need for the new No Thru Truck signs and that truck drivers should not use these streets for any purpose other than delivery. The motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against.**

Chairman Burnham announced to the citizens in attendance that it would take time to put up the signs and inform the drivers to change their routes.

Chief Spera agreed and said that it will take time to educate the vendors but the signs would go up as soon as possible.

## VI. Field Operations - Reports

### A. Activity Report

#### 1. June 21 – July 18, 2012

Chief Spera reported the Department had another busy month and as such was continuing to deal with staffing issues. Chief Spera explained that as investigations become more intricate, more man hours are needed for investigation, which takes personnel away from responding to calls for service. In many instances investigations have been cut short so there is staff available to go to calls for service. Chief Spera also noted that he is also routinely going to calls for service because there is no other staff available. Chief Spera concluded by saying that the Department is doing their best to

maintain top levels of service but that the Department needs more personnel resources to continue to do so.

#### B. CAD System Implementation Update

Chief Spera announced that there has been a delay in the launch of the CAD System and that the official “go live” date has been pushed to mid-October. Chief Spera explained that the reason for this delay is that the software capabilities that the Department is looking for currently don’t exist so the program is being written and custom tailored for the Old Saybrook Police Department. Chief Spera added that the Department is working to install necessary infrastructure now but he doesn’t want to train personnel too far in advance from the “go live” date.

Vice Chairman Metsack asked if the Chief had an estimate for the “go live” date.

Chief Spera responded that he is hoping for mid-October but that it was important that all the pieces are in place before launching the program. He added that he wants to make sure everything is done correctly, rather than rushing into a premature launch.

#### C. Training of New Per Diem Dispatchers

Chief Spera announced that training is approximately 65% completed. Chief Spera added that he recently posted two vacant full time Dispatching Positions. He announced that he planned to offer these positions internally to the new Per Diem Dispatchers first and if no one was interested or qualified for full time status, he would look outside the Department to fill the vacancies.

### **VII. Correspondence**

Chief Spera made mention of a request from the Montessori School to repost and reposition safety signs that are consistent with school zones. Chief Spera informed the Commission that he would review the request and make sure the school met statutory conditions and then respond appropriately with the proper signage.

### **VIII. Discussion of Ad Hoc Committee to Develop an Evaluation Instrument for the Chief of Police**

Commissioner Sparaco reported to the Commission that after thorough review of solicited evaluative tools throughout the State of Connecticut, he believes that the review currently being used by the Old Saybrook Police Department to be the most appropriate and the most thorough document available. In addition, Commissioner Sparaco expressed concerns that other documents attempted to address specific areas in the Chief’s contract that cannot be discussed or amended. Commissioner Sparaco concluded that the easiest approach would be to amend Old Saybrook’s current evaluative tool for the Chief of Police position.

Chairman Burnham clarified that the Commission should adopt a process that is comparable to the process that already exists for other members of the Department. This process includes a self-evaluation and then a meeting with the Commission about the self-evaluation. Additionally, both sides discuss goals for the position and for the Department overall. Chairman Burnham asked Commissioner Sparaco to meet with Commissioner Finch and come up with a final recommendation for the next Police Commission meeting.

### **IX. Comments from the Public**

A citizen asked the Commission to relocate a “children at play” sign on Vista Terrace to a more visible location.

Chief Spera responded that he would work on moving the sign to a more visible position.

Commissioner Finch took a moment to echo the recommendation of Commissioner Sparaco in saying that the current Old Saybrook Evaluative Tool is the best the subcommittee has

found. Commissioner Finch also added that there may be some areas from a state evaluation provided by Commissioner Dunlap that the Commission wants to include but he believes that the Old Saybrook tool would be the easiest to adapt and implement.

Commissioner Burnham reminded the subcommittee that she wanted them to come to the next meeting with a recommendation for a process that the Police Commission could act upon and that future goals for the Department would be discussed together as a group once the evaluative process was in place.

Vice Chairman Metsack inquired as to whether the Commission had any money to solicit legal opinions on the evaluative process.

Chairman Burnham responded that there is a legal line item that can be used to solicit legal opinions.

Chief Spera added that he is more than willing to be evaluated. Additionally, Chief Spera said that he feels that he is constantly being evaluated by the Commission and by the public. Chief Spera also noted that he simply has to agree with the evaluative process and until there is a process put before the Commission, there is nothing for him to agree or disagree with. He went on to say that he agrees the current evaluative tool is the most comprehensive one used that he has reviewed to date and that he looks forward to moving ahead with the process so that a formal evaluation can be completed.

Chairman Burnham asked if all the Commissioners had a copy of the current evaluative tool.

Chief Spera responded that they did but he would send everyone a fresh copy just in case.

A citizen in the audience thanked the Chief for his service and added that he believes the Chief has done a terrific job but he believes a formal evaluative tool is necessary so that the general standards for a Police Chief can be set not just for the future evaluation of Chief Spera but for the future evaluation of any Police Chief in the Town of Old Saybrook.

Chief Spera agreed whole heartedly with this comment and added that the current tool does set established goals and standards for employees.

## **X. Comments from the Chief of Police**

Chief Spera thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He began by emphasizing the Department's shortage of sworn and civilian personnel. He continued by saying that when he first took the role of Police Chief, he made some decisions that resulted in additional sworn staff but a reduction in support personnel. As such, he is now the only Police Chief of a Department our size that does not have a full time secretary or a full time custodial staff. Despite the decision to replace this support staff with an additional police officer, Chief Spera announced that he is still routinely going to calls for service because of a lack of sworn personnel as well. He continued that as Old Saybrook continues to develop commercially, the demand for Police Services will grow and without the proper resources to accommodate this growth, the citizens of Old Saybrook will begin to see a reduction in services they have become accustomed to. Chief Spera concluded that the next budget he presents to the Police Commission will reflect what he feels is the true cost of running a Police Department. The next proposed budget will include all the support staff and sworn staff needed to respond to calls and properly conclude investigations. The next budget will also provide adequate funding for core police programs such as the canine program and funding for policing town events.

Vice Chairman Metsack agreed with the Chief's assessment and added that more citizens needed to know about all the Police do for the community so they can support a true budget.

Chairman Burnham added that it's going to be very important for the Commission to share their knowledge and information with the community so that misconceptions can be cleared up and the truth can be understood.

Commissioner Dunlap asked how the Commission could support a budget that is mostly made up of personnel, without having a full understanding how what Police Personnel do. He continued by asking how the Commission was expected to understand or support any budget without an in depth look at where the Department is falling short and why they are falling short. Commissioner Dunlap expressed his frustration that the data necessary to make budgetary increases or decreases was not yet available. Commissioner Dunlap also expressed frustration that proposed police workshops had not yet begun to take place.

Chief Spera responded that the reason the workshops weren't taking place was because he didn't have the resources to complete the workshops at the expense of necessary police activity. Chief Spera reminded the Commission that the new CAD system would aid the Commission in quantifying how an officer spends his or her time but at a certain point, the Commission needs to trust the Chief when he tells them that the Department needs more resources.

Commissioner Dunlap responded that a good first step would be categorizing the monthly incident report so those reading it could better understand what types of activities the police deal with most often. Commissioner Dunlap continued by saying that the Commission needs to be able to explain to the community that without proper funding, certain services might have to be cut.

Chief Spera explained the Commission that every call that comes into the Police Station is a priority to the caller, which is why the Department can't pick and choose what calls they respond to. He said that no matter how much money is either cut from the budget or added to it, the Department would always find a way to respond to calls for service. The Chief added that with reduced funding and/or insufficient funding moving forward he would not be able to guarantee timely delivery of services or the safety of the public and the police officers.

Chairman Burnham expressed that everyone in the Police Commission and the in the community is concerned about the budget and providing the Police Department with the resources it needs. She continued that as the budget process moves forward, they will all work together to give the Police Department what it needs to operate successfully and no more than that. She concluded that it takes information to give the community reasons to support various services and that Commissioner Dunlap simply wants as much information as possible to give to the people. She concluded that the Commission may have differing views on how to achieve this goal but everyone is moving in the same direction towards that goal.

Commissioner Finch added that it is up to the citizens to decide what they want to pay for but they must understand that everything the police does for the community has a cost associated with it. Commissioner Finch asked Chief Spera how long it would be until the Commission had some viable data from the new CAD System.

Chief Spera responded that it depends on how long it takes personnel to adapt to the system but he is hoping for mid-winter. He added, however, that he doesn't want to hurry through the process for the sake of rolling out potentially unreliable data.

## **XI. Comments and/or Concerns from Commissioners**

Commissioner Stuart asked Chief Spera for the name and rank of all sworn officers, their current assignment and pay rates. He also asked for the name and position of all full and part time dispatchers, their pay rates and number of hours worked on average. He also asked for the names of all civilian employees, their pay rates and their average number of work hours.

Chief Spera responded that he would do his best to provide the Commissioner with the information he requested.

Commissioner Stuart asked for a copy of the Police Commission meeting schedule.

Chairman Burnham responded that he would be provided a list of all upcoming meetings and that the schedule could also be found in the meeting minutes for December of 2011.

Commissioner Finch asked Chief Spera what the current staffing levels are.

Chief Spera responded that there are currently 25 sworn officers including himself. He added that Officer Santello has another nine and a half weeks of Field Training before she can work on her own and that Patrolman Miller should return to full duty in a week.

Commissioner Winkler asked if there had been any news on a new building committee.

Chief Spera said that he had not heard of anyone being appointed to a new committee.

Chairman Burnham added that the First Selectman was very aware of the issue but had not yet formed the new building committee.

## **XII. Adjournment**

**Commissioner Winkler made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Finch. The motion to adjourn the meeting passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.**

*The next regular Police Commission meeting is scheduled for August 27, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the First Floor Conference Room, Old Saybrook Town Hall.*

The meeting minutes for June 23, 2012 were prepared and respectfully submitted by:

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Trent Gerbers  
Records Clerk for the Old Saybrook Police Commission