

**OLD SAYBROOK POLICE COMMISSION**  
**Special Meeting**  
**December 10, 2012**  
**MINUTES**

A special meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, December 10, 2012, at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

**Present:** Chairman Burnham, Vice Chairman Metsack, Commissioners Sparaco, Dunlap and Finch were also present. 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. October 22, 2012 Special Meeting

**A motion was made by Commissioner Dunlap to approve the October 22, 2012 Special Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sparaco. The motion to approve the October 22, 2012 Special Meeting Minutes passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.**

**III. Comments from the Public**

There were no comments from the public.

**IV. 2013 Meeting Schedule**

Commissioner Dunlap informed the Commission that he would be unable to attend the February 25, 2013 meeting as he would be in Australia. He also suggested that the Commission opt to move the May 27, 2013 meeting to June 3, 2013 rather than May 20, 2013.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Finch to approve the proposed 2013 meeting schedule, with meetings occurring on the fourth Monday of each month with the exception of May's meeting, which will be held on June 3, 2013. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Metsack. The motion passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.**

The 2013 meeting schedule is as follows:

January 28  
February 25  
March 25  
April 22  
June 3  
June 24  
July 22  
August 26  
September 23  
October 28  
November 25  
December 23

## V. Sergeant Mercer – Retirement

Chief Spera asked that the Police Commission accept Sergeant Mercer's intention to retire and thank him for his 25 years of service to the Town of Old Saybrook. Chief Spera noted that Sergeant Mercer had served the town honorably and with great distinction over the course of his career, adding that he was a positive influence for the Department and for the Community. Chief Spera concluded that Sergeant Mercer had already conducted an exit interview and had turned in all of his Department issued attire.

**A motion was made by Chairman Burnham to accept Sergeant Mercer's intention to retire and to thank Sergeant Mercer for his excellent work and service to the Town of Old Saybrook. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sparaco. The motion passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.**

## VI. Discuss and Act on filling the vacant Per Diem Patrolman Position

Chief Spera informed the Commission that the budget includes a second per diem Patrolman position that is currently vacant. Chief Spera nominated Sergeant Mercer to fill that vacancy. Chief Spera explained that the cost of returning Sergeant Mercer to per diem status is minimal and that his letter of hire should indicate that he would not be contributing to the pension program.

Chairman Burnham clarified that no new money would be added to the budget to fill this position.

Chief Spera confirmed that the funding for this position was already in the budget and that filling this position would give the Department an additional resource for community events and outside jobs.

**A motion was made by Vice Chairman Metsack to fill the per diem Patrolman position with Sergeant Mercer. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Finch. The motion passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.**

Commissioner Dunlap asked if there were any restrictions on Sergeant Mercer as a per diem officer.

Chief Spera responded that Sergeant Mercer is fully certified as an officer through 2015 and there are no limits to the functions he can perform that are consistent with current levels of training.

## VII. Executive Reports

### A. Financial

#### 1. 13-14 Budget Process/Timeline

Chief Spera announced that the 2013-2014 Budget Process had been launched by the town's new Finance Director. Chief Spera informed the Commission that this year's budget will look different than previous years with this year's analysis including an expanded view of previous years in addition to the 2013-2014 budget request. Chief Spera added that he would be presenting his budget request to the Police Commission at the end of December or the beginning of January so the Commission can vote on the proposal and submit their request to the First Selectman by January 15. Some of the bigger changes that Chief Spera mentioned are moving all Fixed Costs from the Police Budget into a separate budget account and moving some Contractual costs into the Expenses and Supplies budget.

Commissioner Finch asked if Chief Spera knew how other towns handled Departmental Fixed Costs.

Chief Spera responded that most other towns handle Fix Costs in the same way that Old Saybrook will doing this year.

Commissioner Finch asked if Chief Spera felt that Old Saybrook was moving more towards what other towns are doing in terms of budgeting.

Chief Spera responded that Health Care would be taken out of the Police Operating Budget but would be put under a new health care section in the Town's overall budget. Chief Spera continued that most other municipal Police Departments do not list most of the expenditures that the Old Saybrook Police Department lists. For example, most other towns have one utility account for all municipal departments, while Old Saybrook lists utility costs separately. Chief Spera concluded that even though some things are becoming more comparable from town to town there are still many budgeting differences that make for an uneven comparison.

## 2. Vehicle Financing Initiative – Update

Chief Spera reported that meetings for Vehicle Financing are ongoing as he works in conjunction with the Board of Selectman and the Board of Finance to review financing options that will bring in more fuel efficient vehicles under warranty that will lower vehicle maintenance costs and save the town money by buying several upfront. In moving forward with this, Chief Spera also noted that he will request that the Commission flat fund Capital purchases for the next 4 or 5 years.

## **VIII. Workshop – Professional Development**

For more information on this topic, please see the attached presentation. Chief Spera turned the presentation over to the Director of Professional Development Marshall Segar.

The following questions and responses were given during the presentation:

Commissioner Dunlap asked why the Department was looking into having more in-house trainers.

Director Segar responded that more in-house trainers would help the Department become more self-sufficient with regards to its training, which ultimately would make professional development cheaper to conduct.

Commissioner Dunlap asked about the burden on the Department while officers are being trained.

Director Segar responded that any officer wanting to be a trainer must complete a mandatory Methods of Instruction course, which is a 40 hour program. Inevitably, the officer is lost for that 40 hour time period and adjustments to the schedule must be made while the officer is in training. However, Director Segar also stated that the cost to backfill those positions up front will more than pay off in the long run with professional development cost savings.

Commissioner Dunlap asked what an instructor needs to do to maintain his certification. –

Director Segar responded that as long as the instructor is teaching one course annually, then simply teaching the course is enough to maintain certification.

Commissioner Dunlap asked if there are any teaching standards that must be met.

Director Segar responded that POST can audit any instructor at any time. Beyond that, teaching standards are set by the individual Departments.

Vice Chairman Metsack asked how often Police standards and regulations change.

Director Segar responded that in the last five years there have been many changes to Police standards and regulations and that POST can make any changes it deems necessary at any point in time.

A member of the public asked if it could force new recruits to sign service commitment contracts

Chief Spera responded that such contracts have been deemed unconstitutional, however, many bargaining units have language in their agreements that a recruit must stay for a certain period of time or repay a portion of the investment made on their behalf. Chief Spera continued that this particular area could be a problem for Old Saybrook in the future with average starting salary for new recruits being slightly below average and retirement benefits coming in near the bottom. For this reason, new officers may choose to be trained with the Old Saybrook Police Department and then leave to a Department with better compensation packages.

A member of the public asked if it was possible to hire more part time officers like Sergeant Mercer.

Chief Spera responded that the members of the bargaining unit have the first right to all police related work, which means they can't be supplanted by part time officers.

## **IX. Workshop – Patrol Division**

For more information on this topic, please see the attached presentation. Chief Spera turned the presentation over to Master Sergeant Rankin, Sergeant DePerry, Patrolman Kiako, Patrolman Smith and Patrolman Walsh.

The following questions and responses were given during the presentation:

A member of the public asked for the total number of sworn officers in the Department.

Chief Spera responded that there are 25 full time officers, including himself.

A member of the public asked if Animal Control Officers are sworn police officers.

Chief Spera responded that Animal Control Officers are not sworn personnel. Chief Spera added that he is attempting to civilianize several roles within the Department in an attempt to free up time for sworn personnel to perform officer specific duties.

Commissioner Dunlap asked what information is driving the Department to establish a third patrol area.

Master Sergeant Rankin responded that an increase of calls from this area and the desire to provide better patrol coverage has driven this initiative. He added that a third patrol area would cut down on response time to certain areas in town.

A member of the public asked if car inspections were done every day.

Master Sergeant Rankin replied that car inspections are done after every shift and that a car inspection sheet must be filled out and signed by the officer who used the vehicle.

A member of the public asked if vehicles were used for more than one shift in a day.

Chief Spera responded that patrol cars are used for multiple shifts in one day.

A member of the public asked if the Department kept track of statistics on various calls for service.

Chief Spera responded that the Department is in the process of rolling out a new CAD System that would be capable of capturing in depth details on every function of the Department from calls for service to follow up paperwork.

Master Sergeant Rankin added that we currently keep track of basic statistics but that our current system is not capable of tracking the detailed information that the CAD System will be able to provide.

Commissioner Dunlap asked Patrolman Smith how often he is the only patrolman on the midnight shift.

Patrolman Smith responded that he is the only patrolman on the midnight shift two or three shifts a week.

Chairman Burnham added that the Sergeant on the midnight shift isn't simply sitting back at the station waiting for something to happen.

Patrolman Smith agreed, saying that a Sergeant would be at the station if a prisoner was in custody but is usually also responding to calls.

A member of the public asked if officers are able to call for assistance from other towns or from the state police.

Patrolman Smith responded that requests for mutual assistance can be made but the response time to these requests are generally not as timely as necessary.

A member of the public asked about typical staffing levels for the various shifts.

Chief Spera responded that the Department tries to staff four on the day shift, four on the evening shift and three on the midnight shift but often the Department has only three on the day shift, three on the evening shift and two on the midnight shift.

Commissioner Finch asked if staffing levels were based on a full roster or based around the fact that we have two positions that currently aren't filled.

Chief Spera responded that staffing levels are based on a full roster. Chief Spera added that having two full time vacancies is making an already difficult situation, more strenuous on the Department.

A member of the public asked if the Department charges for services at community events.

Chief Spera responded that the Department does charge for community events but that they try to incorporate those events into regular shifts or use civilians when possible to reduce costs.

Commissioner Dunlap stated that the budget hasn't been reduced overall and that the funds that were once set aside for community events have been reallocated into manpower.

Chief Spera responded that Commissioner Dunlap's statement was incorrect and that budget money allocated to police services has gone down. The Department is now using town revenues to pay for the services provided during community events.

A member of the public asked if Old Saybrook had taken the approach to only investigate incidents where there is an injury.

Chief Spera responded that the Department investigates all incidents. Chief Spera added that he did not want Old Saybrook to have a reputation as a town that does not conduct investigations for accidents or crimes.

A member of the public asked if Middletown would be willing to allocate some resources to Old Saybrook prisoners at their Hospital.

Chief Spera responded that once a prisoner is taken into custody that person is their responsibility no matter where they must be transported to. Chief Spera added that another town would never take over the liability of a prisoner from another community.

Commissioner Dunlap asked if there was any conflict between the police as designated first responders and the ambulance unit. The Commissioner also asked if there was any way the town could allocate more resources to the ambulance service.

Patrolman Kiako responded that you can take from one place and give to another but the resources needed to do an adequate job remains the same. Additionally, Patrolman Kiako stated that since the Police Officers have the medical training and are already out patrolling it makes sense for them to be the first responders.

Chief Spera added that every community has a medical first response team and a transport group. In Old Saybrook the Police are the medical first responders and the Old Saybrook Ambulance Association is the transport group. The Middlesex Hospital is the designated transport location.

Commissioner Dunlap asked why nulled cases disappear from police records.

Chief Spera replied that if you are arrested and beat the conviction or are never prosecuted, the case does not exist and there is no record of it. Chief Spera added that the CAD system will be able to keep track of all arrests made and the nulled cases will not disappear because they won't be associated with anyone.

Commissioner Dunlap asked how comparable other communities' data is compared to Old Saybrook.

Chief Spera responded that data is not currently comparable at all because we are the last community to implement a CAD System, which is what other towns are using to generate their data.

Commissioner Dunlap asked why the FBI Crime Statistics state that there were only five assaults in Old Saybrook last year.

Chief Spera responded that the FBI only keeps track of crimes that meet certain qualifications. In this case, the statistics provided by the FBI only represent felony assaults in Old Saybrook.

Chief Spera concluded the presentation by re-affirming that these presentations are not typical of other towns and other police departments. Chief Spera added that he felt it was important that the Commission hear directly from the Sergeants and Patrolman who work for the Old Saybrook Police Department. Chief Spera made mention that every presentation has echoed the same sentiment, which is that the officers want the resources they need to do their jobs effectively and return home safely. Chief Spera concluded that as new shopping developments come to Old Saybrook, the service population is going to increase even though the town's population will not. Therefore, it is important that the Commissioners and the citizens of Old Saybrook understand all that the Department is asked to do not only for the residents of the town but the visitors of Old Saybrook as well.

Chairman Burnham urged any Commissioners that had not yet participated in a ride along to do so because she stated that the amount of work that officers perform during their shift is a real eye opener.

Chief Spera thanked his staff for their hard work and for taking time out of their evening to present to the Police Commission.

**X. Adjournment**

**Chairman Burnham made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Metsack. The motion to adjourn the meeting passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.**

*The next regular Police Commission meeting is scheduled for December 17, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the First Floor Conference Room, Old Saybrook Town Hall.*

The meeting minutes for December 10, 2012 were prepared and respectfully submitted by:

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Trent Gerbers  
Records Clerk for the Old Saybrook Police Commission