

OLD SAYBROOK POLICE COMMISSION
Special Meeting
October 8, 2012
MINUTES

A special meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, October 8, 2012, at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

Present: Chairman Burnham, Vice Chairman Metsack, Commissioners Sparaco, and Stuart 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. Comments from the Public

Tom Stevenson commended the Police Commission and Chief Spera for doing their part to get street lights in town working. He also reminded the Commission that some street lights are still not functional and that it would be prudent to fix all of the lights before Halloween to enhance the safety of the event.

III. Workshop – Criminal Investigations

Chief Spera introduced Detective Sergeant Heiney, a thirty-five year veteran of the Police Force and the head of the Criminal Investigations unit. Chief Spera also introduced Detective Barnes and Detective Perrotti as members of the Criminal Investigations unit as well.

Vice Chairman Metsack asked if the Detectives could provide a ball park number of hours spent traveling between the Police Department and court.

Detective Sergeant Heiney replied that on a fast day he could make it up to court and back in an hour and a half but that the trip generally takes two hours. However, Detective Sergeant Heiney also noted that it is not unusual for a Detective to be tied up at court for several hours if prosecutors need to discuss cases or if testimony needs to be given. In an average week, Detectives go to court 3 times but there have been periods where their presence is needed up to 5 times.

Chief Spera added that the court does not allow for the faxing or emailing of court documents. Chief Spera also expressed that in most instances, policies and procedures are created and carried out by the Police Department but when it comes to dealing with the courts the Department is part of a system that determines how things must be done. As such, when new laws are passed or new rules are made on how to do things, those rules must be followed exactly as they are written.

Chairman Burnham asked if there is any difference in the juvenile transportation process.

Detective Barnes stated that juveniles are not taken to the same building as adult offenders. Juveniles either get released to a parent or taken to a Juvenile Detention Facility.

Chairman Burnham stated that the perception around town is that nothing happens in Old Saybrook.

Chief Spera responded that while it's good people feel safe in the community, this perception is a double edged sword because there are many things that happen in town that simply aren't publicized or talked about. On the one hand, if the Department is doing its job well then the perception is that the Police aren't doing much but if too details about crime in town is divulged then the Department is accused of trying to scare the community into passing a bigger budget. The Chief stated that crime is very personal. The Department should not have to re-victimize

victims by citing their misfortunes to justify the need for Department resources. He stated that he believes in a transparent Department but also values a crime victims right to privacy.

Chairman Burnham asked how many investigations the Detectives handle in a month or a year.

Detective Sergeant Heiney responded that the number of investigations being handled depends on the level of activity at a certain point but the amount of work that goes into each investigation has a lot to do with the crime that was committed. He added that the Criminal Investigation unit always starts out with a plan of how each investigation will be handled but it is not uncommon for investigations to change based on evidence or for a Detective to be pulled away from an investigation entirely to perform another role within the Department.

Detective Perrotti provided the example that if someone comes into the Department and needs fingerprints done, a Patrolman isn't pulled off the road to do this job but instead, one of the Detectives stops what he is doing to perform the task. These delays add up over time and can impede progress in an investigation.

Chief Spera also noted there are very few crimes that legally require an investigation so if the town decides it doesn't want to support a proper Criminal Investigation team then there doesn't necessarily need to be one. The Chief added, however, that he'd be shocked if the town decided that they no longer wanted the Police Department to investigate crimes.

Chairman Burnham asked if there was a fireproof room where evidence is being stored.

Chief Spera responded that there was no such room at the Police Department.

Vice Chairman Metsack asked if there was a kit for the UV camera that the Criminal Investigations unit needs.

Detective Sergeant Heiney responded that there is a kit that includes everything the Department would need and it is approximately \$5,000.00.

Vice Chairman Metsack referenced last year's budget title, "A Line in the Sand," stating that Old Saybrook has come to that line and it is time to start funding the Police Department the right way.

Chief Spera asked Detective Sergeant Heiney how police work at this stage in his career compares to any other point in the last thirty-five years.

Detective Sergeant Heiney replied that he is much busier now. He added that over the last few years laws have become more complex and case law sometimes forces the Department to use technology that they don't have access to. Detective Sergeant Heiney concluded that he feels the Criminal Investigations unit is always trying to do more with less and without the equipment or training; the town of Old Saybrook is left open to potential litigation.

Vice Chairman Metsack asked how many more officers the Department needs.

Chief Spera responded that when he presents the staffing proposal at the end of the workshop series, he will be presenting some creative solutions aimed at saving the town money and providing some much needed assistance to the Police Department.

Chairman Burnham thanked the Detectives for their presentation.

Vice Chairman Metsack asked Detective Sergeant Heiney if he felt the Department needed another Detective on the staff.

Detective Sergeant Heiney responded that he believed another Detective would be very beneficial.

Chief Spera added that his first wish is just to enable the Detectives to do only their Criminal Investigative functions.

Chairman Burnham again thanked the Detectives for their presentation and commended them on a job well done.

IV. Comments from the Public

A member of the public asked when the next meeting would be held.

Chief Spera responded that the next meeting would be in two weeks at the regular meeting time. Chief Spera also noted that there would be a workshop presentation on Information Technology.

A member of the public recommended that a system be implemented that would show how the Detectives spend their time each day.

Chairman Burnham responded that such a system was already being implemented but because of the customization required by the town of Old Saybrook, it would take some time before it was operational.

A member of the public recommended that an article about the needs of the Police Department should be printed in the local news so that citizens could fully understand why the Department needs certain things to do a good job.

Chief Spera responded that an architect is presently working on a building study for the new police building and that this study will be a thorough review of Department needs as well as adhering to state regulations.

V. Comments from the Chief of Police

Chief Spera commended the Detectives on an excellent presentation. Chief Spera also asked Chairman Burnham how he should present some of the usual monthly updates at the next meeting, given the average length of each workshop presentation so far.

Chairman Burnham replied that she would prefer as much be put in writing as possible and that any verbal reports be temporarily condensed until the end of the workshop series.

VI. Comments and/or Concerns from Commissioners

Chairman Burnham asked if it would be acceptable for those in attendance from the Police Commission to receive a copy of the presentation.

Chief Spera said that it would be possible but his concern is that if the information is shared with someone who was not present, the information could be taken out of context and misrepresented.

VII. Adjournment

Commissioner Sparaco made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Metsack . The motion to adjourn the meeting passed with a vote of 4 in favor and 0 against.

The next regular Police Commission meeting is scheduled for October 22, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the First Floor Conference Room, Old Saybrook Town Hall.

The meeting minutes for October 8, 2012 were prepared and respectfully submitted by:

Trent Gerbers
Records Clerk for the Old Saybrook Police Commission