

OLD SAYBROOK POLICE COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
September 23, 2013
MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, September 23, 2013, at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

Present: Chairman Burnham, Vice Chairman Metsack, Commissioners Sparaco, Finch, Dunlap 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. Minutes

A. August 26, 2013 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Sparaco made a motion to approve the August 26, 2013 Regular Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dunlap. The motion to approve the August 26, 2013 Regular Meeting Minutes passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.

III. Comments from the Public

Pete Dion expressed his displeasure with the service he had received from the Police Department with regards to his pistol permit. He stated to the Commission that the application process had taken an unreasonable amount of time and that his efforts to contact a member of the Department for assistance had been unsuccessful.

Chief Spera responded that Mr. Dion's pistol permit had been signed several weeks ago and that he did not know why Mr. Dion had not been contacted. He added that the staff that processes the pistol permits only works 3 hours a week, which makes a large influx of permit applications difficult to deal with in a timely fashion. Chief Spera pointed out that the Police Commission had approved an increase in the Department's budget to expand administrative staff hours but the Board of Selectmen ultimately cut funding for this purpose.

Commissioner Stuart stated that Chief Spera had made the initial decision to cut administrative hours in the Department's budget.

Chief Spera stated that his decision had been made several years ago and that he made that decision so that additional officers could be hired to meet service demands. Chief Spera continued that the Department's number one priority is responding to emergency calls for service and that the new officers were necessary to meet service demands. The Chief added that the decision to use existing monies to hire new police officers was endorsed by the Police Commission and Board of Selectmen.

Commissioner Dunlap asked if the Commission had the authority to measure and review the Department's administrative functionality.

Chairman Burnham stated that the Department had expressed and demonstrated a clear need for additional clerical staff during the workshop series, which is why the Commission endorsed the budget increase for civilianized positions.

Commissioner Dunlap stated the Department's budget did go up but that the money had been reallocated to the School Resource Officers.

Chief Spera stated that this was not exactly the case. He noted that initially the Commission approved an increase for clerical staff but did not support funding for additional School Resource Officers. A counter

proposal was made to hire part time, per diem School Resource Officers and keep the increase for the clerical staff but the Board of Selectman chose to only support the increase for the part time, per diem School Resource Officers.

Commissioner Stuart suggested that a Master Sergeant could spend hours performing clerical functions.

Commissioner Finch replied that the Department's primary purpose is responding to emergency calls for service. He added that he does not want to pay an officer to perform work that should be done by a member of the clerical staff.

Chief Spera guaranteed that Mr. Dion would have his pistol permit tomorrow.

A Citizen stated that he had been involved in several instances where he felt threatened by a neighbor and that the Department had failed to bring about a satisfactory resolution to the situation.

Chairman Burnham responded that it was difficult to comment without understanding more about the case but that there is a process that must be followed to file a formal complaint against the Department.

Chief Spera added that the situation needed to be attacked on two fronts. The first is the complaint itself and the second is a review of the case to this point and how it has been handled.

Chief Spera referred the citizen to Lieutenant Roche for further investigation.

IV. Executive Reports

A. Financial

1. 13-14 Budget Status

Chief Spera stated that the Town has not yet locked in a fuel price for the fiscal year and he hopes that negotiations for this issue will conclude soon. Chief Spera added that the Small Misc. Equipment line item was heavily expended due to the purchase of ammunition for the Department.

Commissioner Finch asked about the Computer Support and Upgrade account.

Chief Spera stated that this account has been largely expended due to yearly contracts that are paid at the beginning of the fiscal year.

2. Asset Forfeiture

Account Balance: \$20,473.15

3. Capital Sinking Fund

Account Balance: \$40,278.25

4. Traffic Safety Fund

Account Balance: \$36,947.98

5. Law Enforcement Fund

Account Balance: \$22,280.53

Vice Chairman Metsack stated that a press release is being drafted about how the money from this account is being used.

6. Old Saybrook Police Fund

Account Balance: \$320.00

7. Police Explorer Fund

Account Balance: \$4,970.27

8. Police K-9 Fund

Account Balance: \$4,261.71

B. Administrative

1. Contract Negotiations Update – Police Union

Chief Spera stated that both sides have met three times and made formal proposal exchanges. The next negotiating session is on October 3, 2013. Chief Spera stated that he hopes negotiations on the proposals can begin at this meeting.

2. Fleet Lease Purchase Program Update

Chief Spera informed the Commission that the vehicles have been ordered but the Department is waiting to order the equipment so that everything comes in at the same time.

Vice Chairman Metsack asked if the loan from First Niagara also covers outfitting the vehicles.

Chief Spera acknowledged that the loan also covered vehicle outfitting.

3. K-9 Kendo

Chief Spera informed the Commission that Kendo has a cracked canine and an abscess around his rear molars. Kendo will be able to recover from the surgery and return to full duty but the operation will cost \$2,700.00. The money for the surgery will be taken out of the off budget K-9 account.

V. Workshop – Eastpointe Incentive Housing – North Main Street

Eastpointe Incentive Housing made a presentation to the Old Saybrook Police Commission with regards to an affordable housing complex being built on North Main Street. The following questions were asked and answered during the presentation:

Vice Chairman Metsack asked what someone has to earn to qualify for the affordable housing.

Eastpointe responded that anyone can qualify for the affordable housing. A formula is used to determine a tenant's rent based on their income.

Commissioner Dunlap asked what will prevent commuters from using resident parking.

Eastpointe responded that there will be controlled access to the resident parking lot.

Vice Chairman Metsack asked how many units there will be. Metsack.

Eastpointe responded that they are hoping to build 186 total units but they are waiting on a decision from other Town Committees to determine if the project should adhere to a regulation specifying the number of units that must be built per acre.

Vice Chairman Metsack asked if the Department of Transportation is planning on widening the intersection near the entrance of the housing development.

Eastpointe responded that they had no knowledge of the Department of Transportation's plans but that the State Traffic Commission has approved plans for a 186 unit project.

Chairman Burnham asked how many people are estimated to move in with 186 units.

Eastpointe responded that they anticipate approximately 320 people.

Chairman Burnham expressed a concern that too many vehicles are being added to the local roads.

Eastpointe stated that it is their hope that residents will utilize mass transit for work and will choose to walk around the downtown area rather than drive.

Chief Spera clarified that there is no emergency access through Burger King.

Eastpointe affirmed that there is no emergency access through Burger King.

Chief Spera asked if there is a management company that will oversee the project.

Eastpointe responded that there will be a management company for the project but one has not been chosen yet.

Chairman Burnham expressed that this project should not be built under the stipulations of the preexisting approval for this land and that a new application should be approved.

Chief Spera stated that the proposed project is smaller than the original plan had approved, which is likely the reason an extension was given.

Chairman Burnham asked why the Chief was hesitant to give concurrence.

Chief Spera replied that he had not seen enough yet and that he is concerned with the flow of traffic in that area.

Chairman Burnham asked how many units will be built if the Zoning Committee does not approve an exception to the established regulation.

Eastpointe responded that they will likely build 216 units but the local ordinance could call for up to 280 units.

Chief Spera asked if there will be elevators in each building.

Eastpointe responded that there are no elevators planned at this time.

Chief Spera stated that having no elevators is a major concern from a public safety standpoint, especially for potential medical calls.

Chairman Burnham asked if a specific demographic was being targeted for the units.

Eastpointe responded that they anticipate a mix of renters and that these units will be attractive to several people.

Chief Spera asked how long it will take to create site plans once the project is approved.

Eastpointe responded that it will take 45-60 days to develop a site plan.

Chief Spera asked when the project would break ground if everything goes according to plan.

Eastpointe stated that an ideal timetable would include final approvals in the spring of 2014 and construction beginning in the summer of 2014.

Brad Thorpe asked if there would be an occupancy limit per unit.

Eastpointe responded that there will be stipulations in the lease that specify unit occupancy.

Brad Thorpe asked if the units could be sublet.

Eastpointe responded that subletting would not be permitted.

A citizen asked how many parking spaces there would be.

Eastpointe responded there will be 340 parking spaces.

A citizen asked if there was a buffer zone between the housing development and the adjacent cemetery.

Eastpointe stated that there will be a 50 foot buffer between the housing development and the cemetery.

Chief Spera expressed a concern that the planned number of parking spaces will not be adequate.

Eastpointe replied that they felt confident in their formula and the planned number of parking spaces.

Chief Spera stated that he would review the information that was presented and report back to the Commission at the next meeting.

VI. Executive Session – Review Employee Exit Interview

Commissioner Finch Made a motion to enter into Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sparaco. The motion to enter into Executive Session passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against.

Executive Session began at 8:49PM.

Executive Session ended at 9:17PM.

VII. Comments from the Public

A citizen stated her displeasure with the planned number of units for the affordable housing complex. She added that this development will only further burden the town's resources.

VIII. Comments from the Chief of Police

Chief Spera stated that he hopes members of the Commission will come to upcoming meetings in support of the Police Building Project. He added that the referendum for the project will be on October 10th from 12:00PM to 8:00PM.

Chief Spera also expressed his displeasure with Mr. Dion's pistol permit situation. He informed the Commission that he would look into the Department's role in the permit process but that the delay is largely due to the state backlog and a newly implemented interview requirement that must be conducted for all permit applications.

Commissioner Stuart asked if the state is passing interview responsibilities to the municipalities.

Chief Spera responded that the municipalities should have been conducting interviews all along. Chief Spera added that the Lieutenant would present the Department's revised pistol permit procedure at the next meeting.

Commissioner Stuart expressed concern that not enough attention is being paid to administrative functions in the Department and again suggested that an officer could be occasionally used to supplement clerical staff.

Chief Spera responded that while this might be possible, he feels that the Department is not doing enough proactive policing and making officers responsible for administrative tasks will only make it more difficult to achieve a proactive approach to law enforcement. Additionally, there is an issue with assigning new tasks to members of the bargaining unit. Chief Spera concluded that he is constantly trying to balance the budget with the schedule and using officers to perform administrative tasks would only make that task more difficult.

Vice Chairman Metsack stated that the housing development project needs a new application and permit. He asked Chief Spera if they had the option of making Eastpointe reapply.

Chief Spera stated that he could deny the project concurrency, which would be appealed and likely overturned. He stated that he would speak to the State Traffic Commission but the extension would probably still be honored.

IX. Comments and/or Concerns from Commissioners

Commissioner Dunlap asked why the Commission had not reviewed any correspondence for several months.

Chief Spera responded that there hasn't been any correspondence for the Commission for quite some time. He added that thank you letters were typically displayed at the Department and complaints generally come in as phone calls.

X. Adjournment

Vice Chairman Metsack made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stuart. The motion to adjourn the meeting passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against.

The next regular Police Commission meeting is scheduled for October 28, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. in the First Floor Conference Room, Old Saybrook Town Hall.

The meeting minutes for September 23, 2013 were prepared and respectfully submitted by:

Trent Gerbers
Records Clerk for the Old Saybrook Police Commission