

**OLD SAYBROOK POLICE COMMISSION**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**July 28, 2014**  
**MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, July 28, 2014, at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

Present: Chairman Finch, Commissioners Burnham, Maselli and Stuart were also present. Chief Spera was present from the Department of Police Services.

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

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

**II. Minutes**

A. June 23, 2014 Regular Meeting

**Commissioner Burnham made a motion to approve the June 23, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Maselli. The motion to approve the June 23, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes was approved with a vote of 3 in favor and 0 against. Chairman Finch abstained.**

**III. Comments from the Public**

A member of the public asked if the same rules that apply to motor vehicles also apply to golf carts. She elaborated that she had seen several instances of inappropriate behavior from golf cart drivers.

Chief Spera responded that golf cart owners are given copies of the municipal statute that governs golf cart use at the moment of registration or renewal. Chief Spera continued that golf carts are mostly held to the same standard as motor vehicles and violations are ticketed if witnessed by an officer. Chief Spera noted that this year the Department encountered the first fraudulent registration. The owner's golf cart plate was repossessed.

Commissioner Burnham asked if golf carts were allowed on roads with a speed limit greater than 25 mph.

Chief Spera responded that golf carts were not allowed to drive on roads with a speed limit greater than 25 mph.

**IV. Executive Reports**

A. Financial

1. 13-14 Operating/Contractual Budgets

Chief Spera stated that the final budget report is consistent with the monthly updates he has presented to the Commission. The final budget report shows a deficit of approximately \$95,000.00. Chief Spera stated that the largest part of this overrun from Expenses and Supplies comes from the gasoline line item, which was overrun by almost \$27,000.00. This overrun was largely due to the delay in establishing a price per gallon rate for the Department and the established rate being higher than what was budgeted. Additionally, the Department is paying for rental of the temporary fueling tank. The major personnel issues came from the retirement of Sergeant Hull, the departure of Patrolman Souriyamath and the extended leave time taken by Patrolman Ziolkovski and Dispatcher Olszewski. In each instance, substantial amounts of overtime was used to backfill the vacancies. Further exacerbating the problem is that many of the personnel line items are not properly funded, which makes them susceptible to overrun with any extended personnel absence. Chief Spera stated that the final major contributor to the budget deficit was an unexpected contract settlement increase. This line item was funded at approximately \$46,000.00 but cost approximately \$56,000.00. Chief Spera concluded that the Department and Police Commission are working towards fully funding personnel line items, which will help offset these issues in future fiscal years. The final status of the budget has been presented to the First Selectman and Finance Director and they are comfortable with the explanations for the deficit.

Commissioner Burnham asked how many officers are eligible to retire.

Chief Spera responded that about five or six officers could give him two week notice at any time.

Chairman Finch asked if the Chief knew of any officers that were considering retirement.

Chief Spera responded that he believed one officer was considering retirement.

Chairman Finch stated that even if no one retires, the status of Master Sergeant van der Horst's shoulder is cause for concern. Chairman Finch concluded that the Master Sergeant may not be able to return to active duty.

Chief Spera also noted that unemployment compensation is being taken out of the Department's budget and there is no money allocated to the Department for this expenditure. This expense cost the Department an additional \$3,000.00.

2. 14-15 Operating Budget

Chief Spera stated that the Department has not incurred much cost yet. He informed the Commission that one Patrolman with a non-work related injury has been out since June and the Department is hoping to have him back by the end of August. Master Sergeant van der Horst is also currently unavailable because of a non-work related injury. With the Lieutenant away at the FBI Academy, the Department currently has a void in senior leadership. Another Sergeant is contemplating knee surgery, which would remove him from duty for an extended period of time. Currently the Department budgets each Sergeant to take 6 sick days, but it already appears that the reality will far exceed the budget.

3. Asset Forfeiture

Balance: \$20,427.88

4. Police Administrative Fund

Balance: \$13,319.35

5. Traffic Safety Fund

Balance: \$23,703.26

Commissioner Stuart asked if money from this line item could be used to backfill.

Chief Spera replied that this fund could only be used to backfill if the assigned task meets certain parameters within the Traffic Safety Fund.

6. Law Enforcement Fund

Balance: \$17,207.53

7. Old Saybrook Police Fund

Balance: \$320.00

8. Police Explorer Fund

Balance: \$5,720.27

Chief Spera informed the Commission that there are ten new Police Explorers.

9. Police K-9 Fund

Balance: \$2,779.28

B. Administrative

1. Activity Report

Chief Spera stated that interviews for Patrolmen were held today and that a Sergeant position was posted as well. Chief Spera added that there are no vacancies yet but the Department is trying to maintain a current hiring list.

2. Legal Traffic Authority Activity

Chief Spera stated that he is working with the representatives from Max's Place to finalize the project. He added that the North Main Street project just applied for permitting but that he could not comment on the application until he sees a traffic study.

**V. Correspondence**

Chief Spera stated that he received a letter from an Old Saybrook resident requesting a second stop sign on his road. Chief Spera stated that he would look into the situation and determine if another sign could and should be added.

**VI. Commission Communication Between Public Meetings - Discussion**

Chairman Finch stated that there was a discussion at the previous meeting based on what could and could not be discussed by Police Commissioners outside of a publicly held meeting.

Commissioner Burnham stated that Commissioners cannot communicate with each other about Commission business unless it is noticed in a public meeting. The only way that Commissioners can meet is during a caucus of a political party that the Commissioner is a member of.

Chief Spera agreed and stated that Commissioners are powerless unless they are together in a group at a public meeting. Chief Spera asked Commissioners to remember that their personal email is subject to FOI, as well text messages if Commissioners are discussing police business.

Commissioners Stuart stated that the Commission would leave the dissemination of information to the Chief's discretion.

**VII. Operational Workshops – Discussion of Topics**

Chairman Finch stated that Commissioner Dunlap would like to have a discussion about CAD system information.

Chief Spera recommended that Sergeant Gardner and Director Coco be brought in during a regular meeting or a special meeting to discuss the current state of the CAD system.

Commissioner Stuart asked when the CAD system went live.

Chief Spera replied that the CAD system went live in late July of last year. He added that the system has provided enormous amounts of data but as parameters continue to change the data gets skewed. Chief Spera elaborated the CAD data can be used to say almost anything so the Department needs to determine what questions are important and need answers. For example, Chief Spera stated that he would like to know how often officers are being sent to calls without adequate backup or how often a task is started and not finished because a higher priority task comes through and takes the officer away from their initial task. Chief Spera concluded that the CAD is not going to be able to tell the Commission if more cops should be hired but will be better at showing how often officers spend working on particular tasks. Chief Spera added that he is anxious to see how little time is spent doing active patrol work, as a lack of proactive patrols concerns him.

Chairman Finch added that what seems important to them as Commissioners is not necessarily a priority for the Department. He stated that it would be helpful to create a priority list of topics that address needs first and requests for additional information second.

Commissioner Stuart asked about the scheduling for the School Resource Officers.

Chief Spera responded that Patrolman Tanner is scheduled on a per diem basis at Old Saybrook High School, Lieutenant McDonald is scheduled on a per diem basis at Old Saybrook Middle School, and Patrolman Kiako is a full time employee stationed at Goodwin School.

Chairman Finch asked if the part time, per diem employees were willing to cover shifts when needed.

Chief Spera responded that Lieutenant McDonald can't cover shifts because he is confined by his pension plan. Chief Spera added that Patrolman Tanner covers midnight shifts when needed. Sergeant Mercer and Patrolman Mulvihill also cover the occasional shift.

Chairman Finch asked when Patrolman Ayotte would graduate from the Police Academy.

Chief Spera replied that Patrolman Ayotte would graduate at the end of September and then begin his field training.

### **VIII. Comments from the Public**

There were no comments from the public.

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

Chief Spera stated that the art show was a success for the town and all ten of the new Police Explorers participated in the event.

Chairman Finch stated that he was pleased that the Explorers performed well and that their presence makes it seem like the town has a much larger police force.

Chief Spera stated that the Department has been trying for several years to apply for grant money, which would be used to purchase a new Department Police Boat. The Department was just informed that their application for a \$361,570.00 grant through the Coast Guard was successful. The boat being replaced is twenty-one years old and well beyond serviceability.

Commissioner Stuart asked where the remaining \$90,000.00 for the boat will come from.

Chief Spera stated that the remainder of the money will come from a town account called Capital Nonrecurring. Chief Spera continued that the total amount for the boat will be presented at a town meeting but the actual cost to the town will be explained.

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

Commissioner Burnham expressed concern about driving habits on Route 1.

Chief Spera acknowledged the concern and stated that when the CAD is ready to be mined for data, he will be interested to see how much time the Department spends doing proactive patrolling. Chief Spera expressed that he feels the Department does not spend enough time patrolling.

Chairman Finch asked if a cruiser that is not being used could be parked near a stop light to prevent dangerous driving in town.

Chief Spera responded that he does not support using an unmanned car for many reasons. This type of practice may also cause grievances.

### **XI. Adjournment**

**Commissioner Stuart made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Burnham. 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 August 25, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.  
in the First Floor Conference Room, Old Saybrook Town Hall.*

The meeting minutes for July 28, 2014 were prepared and respectfully submitted by:

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Trent Gerbers  
Records Clerk for the Old Saybrook Police Commission