**OLD SAYBROOK POLICE COMMISSION**

Regular Meeting

October 27, 2014

A regular meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, October 27, 2014 at the Old Saybrook Town Hall in the First Floor Conference Room.

**Present:** Chairman Finch, Vice Chairman Savino, Secretary Stuart, Commissioners Sparaco, Burnham, and Masselli. Chief Spera, Lieutenant Roche, and Sergeants DePerry and Walsh were present from the Department of Police Services.

**Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**Minutes**

**Commissioner Stuart made a motion to accept the minutes of the September 22, 2014 regular meeting of the Police Commission. Commissioner Masselli seconded the motion.**

During the discussion phase two corrections/amendments were requested. Commissioner Stuart requested that under the heading “A Celebration of Service – Sergeant Gardner Retirement” that Sergeant Gardner be referenced as “Sergeant” and not “Chief Gardner” as the minutes portray. Vice Chairman Savino and Commissioner Masselli requested under the section entitled “CAD System – Preliminary Report Discussion” that in the fourth paragraph, sentence two read “If he feels that there is information that would be useful for the Police Commission the Chief can bring that information to them at his discretion, but that he has no interest in reviewing reports from the CAD System.”

**The Motion passed with a vote of six (6) in favor and zero (0) against.**

**Comments from the Public**

There were no comments from the public.

**Executive Reports**

**Financial**

The Chief reviewed the 2014-2105 expenses and supplies budget with the Commission. He pointed out that while the report has been revised since the last meeting of the Commission, it was not current due to a lack of clerical support over the past several weeks. He added that he is not concerned with any line item in the Expenses and Supplies or Contractual Budgets that he has not already discussed at previous meetings.

The Chief provided the Commission with the balances on the following off budget accounts: Asset Forfeiture $20,427.88, Police Administrative Fund $31,489.18, Driver Safety Fund $27,191.89, Law Enforcement Fund$17,207.53, Old Saybrook Police Fund $320.00, Police Explorer Fund $5,696.85, and the Police K-9 Fund $1,176.41.

Vice Chairman Savino asked about the growth in the Police Administrative Fund. The Chief explained that the State has changed the process of accepting fees for applications such as weapons permits. The change requires the Town to accept the funds and pay the State quarterly when invoiced. The Chairman noted that by doing so, the State has passed its liability of following up with payees to the Town.

**Administrative**

**Personnel Report**

The Chief announced the resignation of Executive Secretary Trent Gerbers. The Chief stated that Trent was a tremendous asset to the Department and he will be missed. Trent has taken a full time position as the Executive Assistant for the Superintendent of Schools in Old Saybrook. The Chief wished him well.

Master Sergeant van der Horst remains on sick leave due to an out of work injury. While both the Chief and the Master Sergeant were hopeful for a late November / early December return, the Master Sergeant’s Doctor feels that a late January / early February return is more likely. The Chief stated that his absence is causing an operational staffing issue. He stated that while only six sick days were budgeted to replace Master Sergeant van der Horst during the 14-15 fiscal year, he is doing his best to limit replacement costs by changing Master Sergeant Rankin’s schedule and back filling him, when possible with Patrolman on the evening shift. The Chief added that being down two positions is putting a strain on the schedule, the personnel, and the budget.

Patrolman Trainee Cerra has been at the Police Academy for several weeks now and seems to be doing well. Patrolman Ayotte is halfway through his field training and is progressing in accordance with expectations. The Chief is eager to have him as a personnel asset on the schedule.

**Discuss and Act on a Proposal Concerning Clerical Positions**

Chairman Finch advised the Commission that since Trent Gerbers announced he was leaving for a full time position with the Board of Education, he has been speaking with the Chief about clerical positions in the Department. He stated that he felt it was time, as the Commission voted for during the last budget process, for the Chief to have a full time assistant and for the Records Division to have at least one full time employee. He stated that Chief created a plan that he supported and advised him to speak with the First Selectman and the Finance Director about it. He went on to say that the Chief also met with the Chairman of the Board of Finance who stated that it was not a Board of Finance matter, rather a matter for the First Selectman and the Police Commission. The Chairman then asked the Chief to explain the work that he has done on the matter.

The Chief reported that his plan involved adding no new positions, rather changing two current positions from part time to full time, just as he proposed in the last budget process that was unanimously approved by the Commission. He stated that it was his desire to promote one of the current Records Clerks to full time and hire a full time assistant for his office effective January 1st. He stated that he could achieve this goal with less than an $8,000 impact to the current budget and a $33,000 impact on next year’s personnel budget. Both positions would be salary, exempt positions and would have an annual compensation of $52,000 (Chief’s Assistant) and $38,000 (Records). The Chief added that neither position would receive a raise in the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

The Chief then met several times with the First Selectman and the Finance Director, both of whom were very helpful. As a result of their discussions, the First Selectman stated that he would be supportive of a plan that allowed for 1) increase hours for Records Division Staff effective immediately, 2) the hiring of a full time assistance for the Chief’s Office with in January 2015 and 3) the change of a record clerk position from part time to fulltime a few weeks prior to occupying the new police facility. The First Selectman’s proposal reduced the current fiscal year’s costs to $6,000 in personnel costs, keeping the aforementioned salaries the same. The First Selectman and Finance Director also stated that they would be able to absorb health benefit costs for both positions this year and next year due to the successful negotiation of labor contracts and the savings yielded by employees switching from the budgeted PPO plans to the new HDHP Plans. The First Selectman requested that the Chief speak with the Chairman of the Board of Finance about the matter.

Chief Spera reported that he met with the Chairman of the Board of Finance and briefed him on the matter. He reports that the Chairman informed him that he did not feel as the matter concerned the Board of Finance, rather that personnel matters concerning the police department were matters of the Police Commission and the First Selectman as health benefits were involved. The Chief reported that he briefed the First Selectman on his meeting with the Chairman of the Board of Finance. The First Selectman stated that he would support the plan as discussed but that it was contingent on the approval of the Police Commission.

The Chief then reiterated his perceived need for these positions and respectively requested that the Commission approve the plan as revised by the First Selectman.

**A motion was made by Vice Chairman Savino to allow the Chief to implement the plan as presented which includes the hiring of an Executive/Administrative Assistant for the Chief in the first week of January 2015 and the promotion of one of the Record Clerks to fulltime within a few weeks of transitioning to the new facility, around March/April 2015, with both hiring processes and formal hiring dates to be established by the Chief of Police. Commissioner Stuart seconded the motion.**

Commissioner Stuart asked if the Chief could hire a temporary worker in the meantime to assist him until a full time employee could be found. The Chief stated that he will be using the extra hours allotted in the proposal to have the current part time secretaries perform timely data entry for his office.

Vice Chairman Savino asked if the monies in the budget allocated for Commission Clerk would be in next years budget. The Chief reported that line item would be zeroed out as his new assistant would be responsible for staffing the Police Commission.

Commissioner Masselli asked if the First Selectman would support the increase of personnel funds to maintain these two positions in next years budget. The Chief stated that he specifically spoke with the First Selectman about the issue and that he is confident that the First Selectman will support the positions in next years budget.

Chairman Finch sated that he felt that both positions were important to the operation of the Department and are needed.

**The motion passed with six (6) in favor and zero (0) against.**

The Chief thanked the Commission for their support on the matter and stated that it will enhance the operation and personally and professionally assist him. He sated that he would commence the hiring process without delay and inform one of the records clerks of their full time employment in the Spring of 2015.

**2014 Holiday Meeting Schedule**

Chairman Finch wanted to remind the Commissioners that the next two regular meetings of the Police Commission were scheduled for the third Monday of each month rather than the fourth Monday of the month due to Thanksgiving and Christmas.

**FEMA Port Security Grant – Town Meeting Endorsement**

Chairman Finch reported on the Board of Finance Meeting that he attended concerning the FEMA Port Security Grant. He stated that it was one of the most interesting meetings he has ever attended. The Chairman stated that while the Commission does not have to approve the grant, and that the Commission was briefed on the grant and the award, there was never an opportunity based on the timing of the award and the Selectman and Board of Finance Meetings to formally endorse the grant. The Chairman stated that he felt it was important to do so prior to the Town meeting on the issue.

The Chief thanked the Chairman for attending the Board of Finance meeting and for his support. He then introduced Patrol Sergeants DePerry and Walsh who were responsible for the successful grant application. Sergeant DePerry then provided a presentation to the Commission on the Port Security Grant.

During and following the presentation Commissioners asked questions concerning the sustainment of the new equipment, operational costs, disposal of the current vessel, and timeframe for the new vessel to be placed into service.

The Chief reported that he was pleased to be able to present not only a true operational need to the Town but also a financial solution. He spoke about how he has identified the need to replace the vessel since becoming Chief and that each time money was proposed to be set aside into a sinking fund during the budget process for the future purchase of a vessel, it has been cut. He also stated that two years ago, the Board of Finance directed him at a meeting to pursue grant opportunities and return for matching funds once a grant was secured.

The Chief mentioned that the replacement of the vessel would not change the operation. He stated that marine patrol is not a new program and it has been in existence in Old Saybrook since before he was born.

The Chief spoke about how proud he was of Sergeants Walsh and DePerry who prepared the Federal Grant and the members of the Marine Strategic Planning Committee who put in much time and effort. He added that the Town should be appreciative of the in house talent to accomplish such tasks.

**Vice Chairman Savino made a motion to endorse the FEMA Port Security Grant and the Board of Selectman’s endorsement to provide the 25% matching funds required as part of the grant. Commissioner Stuart seconded the motion.**

**The motion passed with six (6) in favor and zero (0) against.**

**Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

**Comments from the Public**

There were no comments from the public.

**Comments from the Chief of Police**

Chief Spera expressed his appreciation to the Commission for their support over his first five years of serving as Police Chief. He reported that when he took office on October 21, 2009 that he implemented the Department’s first ever Fiver Year Operational Strategic Plan which will soon expire. He stated that he is proud of the accomplishments of the staff, which included accomplishing hundreds of strategic planning goals, while managing significant incidents such as two hurricanes, a severe blizzard and the emergency relocation of the Department. The Chief reported that he convened a Department Strategic Planning Session that lasted for nine hours. During the Session the staff outlined and created the Department’s next five year strategic plan that will be implemented in January. He stated that he was very proud of how engaged the staff was in the process as well as their willingness to share ideas to enhance the Department and it’s delivery of services.

Chairman Finch commented that he attended the first hour of the session and was impressed with the session and the level of participation by Department Members. He stated that he shared with the Department that now that he has a scanner, he is amazed at how busy the Department is and the types of calls that officers are required to respond to.

**Comments and/or Concerns from Commissioner**

Vice Chairman Savino spoke about the numerous positive comments he has received and heard from both adults and teens about the Department’s coverage of the Terri Brodeur Cancer Walk. He stated that the Department’s positive presence was known by all, that officers were engaged and made it fun for the walkers. He also stated that many walkers said that due to the level of policing that it was the safest town to walk in during the event.

The Chief thanked the Vice Chairman for his feedback. He stated that he encouraged officers that day to help motivate the walkers by playing inspirational music over the police vehicle PA system and engaging with them as much as possible.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.