

OLD SAYBROOK POLICE COMMISSION

Special Meeting

January 7, 2015

MINUTES

A special meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Wednesday, January 7, 2015 at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

Present: Chairman Finch, Vice Chairman Savino, Secretary Stuart, Commissioners Burnham, Maselli, Sparaco and Dunlap. Chief Spera and Lieutenant Roche were present from the Department of Police Services.

I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Finch called the meeting to order at 6:56 PM and led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance

II. Comments from the Public

A member of the public stated that he appreciates the work of the School Resource Officers and thanked the Old Saybrook Police Department for all the hard work they do.

Sal D'Aquila stated the Old Saybrook Police Department does a lot within the town and keeps the community safe. He stated that Chief Spera has set the bar very high and asked the Commission to support the budget.

Sean Boucher stated that he has two children in the Middle School and he appreciates the School Resource Officers and the other officers in town and asked the Commission to support the budget.

Steve Beiler stated that he supports the budget and said that the School Resource Officers along with all the other officers are an excellent group and he asked the Commission to please support the budget as presented.

Kevin Lane stated that he supports the budget and asked the Commission to do the same and he thanked everyone who attended the meeting.

Mike Ellison stated that he supports the budget and asked the Commission to do the same. He also stated how much it means to him to have the School Resource Officers in the school systems.

III. Discussion and ACTION pertaining to the Proposed 2015 Police Commission Meeting Schedule

Commissioner Burnham made a motion to approve the Proposed 2015 Police Commission Meeting Schedule. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Maselli. The motion to approve the 2015 Police Commission Meeting Schedule passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.

IV. Executive Reports

- a. Discipline

Chief Spera stated in accordance with Department Regulation 55.14 that it is his responsibility as Chief of Police to report discipline imposed on a member of the police department to the Police Commission. He stated that a Police Officer has been issued a four day unpaid suspension, required to write a letter of apology and issued a final warning for violating General Order 4.16 entitled Social Media.

A Dispatcher was issued a two day unpaid suspension for violating Special Order 12-002 entitled Emergency Police Dispatching, Use, Standards and Compliance. A Dispatcher was issued a three day unpaid suspension and issued a Final Warning for violating General Order 4.16 entitled Social Media.

The employees waived their rights to a loudermill hearing and accepted the discipline. The unpaid suspensions will be served in February at a time that is fiscally and operationally convenient for the Department.

V. Presentation, Discussion, and Possible ACTION pertaining to the Proposed 2015-2016 Operating and Capital Budget

Chairman Finch asked if everyone had looked over the budget booklet that Chief Spera prepared for the Commission. He stated that everything was included in the booklet in the same format as previous years. He then asked the Commission if they had any questions.

Commissioner Sparaco stated that the proposed budget would be hard to finalize tonight since the opening of the new police station leaves a lot of unanswered questions.

Chairman Finch replied that is to be expected and there are certain expenses that are unknown at this time to run the new facility.

Chief Spera stated that certain numbers such as electricity and heat are estimates. These numbers came from a meeting that the Chief had with the town finance director and architect. Chief Spera estimates that it will be about 1 year before hard numbers can be given.

Commissioner Maselli stated that the Commission should heed the advice of the engineers and architect for the time being and acquire actual numbers from the Chief as the year progresses. He stated that this is the best information to go off of and numbers should be expected to fluctuate.

Vice Chairman Savino stated that the majority of the budget is made up of contractual items that were settled in arbitration. He then questioned if the First Selectman locks in the town for gas prices.

Chief Spera answered yes the First Selectman locks in the town for gas prices.

Chairman Finch stated that when you subtract personnel and gasoline there are not a lot of items to adjust within the proposed budget. He presumes there will be a lot of miscellaneous items that will come up with the opening of the new building.

Commissioner Sparaco questioned the liability of the new buildings heating and cooling contractors.

Chief Spera explained that there is a one year warranty on the heating and cooling systems that was not yet described to him but that he specifically set dollars aside to continue maintenance.

Chief Spera stated that in the proposed budget there was a line item for a second finger print machine. In the new facility a second machine will be needed since no civilians will be allowed to enter the detention area. He stated his plan is to put the new machine up front for civilian use to process pistol permits, adoption forms, Board of Education background prints etc. He then told the Commission that there are two options the town can choose from which are leasing or purchasing.

Commission Burnham asked how long fingerprint machines last.

Chief Spera stated that the warranty has expired on the machine they currently own but that they have a maintenance agreement. The new machine is ADA compliant. He stated that he will adjust the machine accordingly once it is determined where more finger prints are taken in the new building. He also stated that the prices regarding the purchase and leasing options are negotiated by a state wide contract.

Commissioner Dunlap stated that there are many building variables such as water, natural gas and electricity but those add up to about 70,000.00 out of a 3.3 million dollar budget.

Commissioner Sparaco stated that the gasoline account varies due to the fluctuating market prices.

Chairman Finch stated that we have overspent in the past on gas due to the changing prices. He then said Chief Spera can estimate the gallons of gasoline usage but it is the First Selectman that enters into a contract for the whole town so internally there is very little control.

Commissioner Sparaco asked if it's possible for the Board of Finance to cut the gasoline budget due to the declining prices in today's current market.

Chairman Finch suggested the Board of Finance should focus on the amount of gallons used not dollars spent when looking at figures.

Chief Spera stated that the price per gallon is a factor only when the town enters into a contract. If prices decline that becomes favorable for the department but the budget should not be altered. If the price of gas climbs back up again then that line item will now be negative. He also stated that the Police Department has the most vehicles constantly on the road and when the town has no contract it affects his budget more than others.

Vice Chairman Savino stated that the Police Department is the only 24 hour service with patrol cars continuously being driven.

Chief Spera agreed with Vice Chairman Savino's statement.

Commissioner Dunlap stated there are 3 budget groups. Personnel, which takes up 88% of the budget, Expenses, which is down 5% and Professional Services which stays flat except for the new finger print system.

Chairman Finch inserted that most of the budget is contractual and that the Commission is not involved in contract negotiation in any way.

Commissioner Dunlap agreed but stated that the personnel budget is increasing every year due to contractual obligations.

Chief Spera stated that The Police Department is a service agency and people must deliver those services.

Vice Chairman Savino stated that personnel costs are not unique to Old Saybrook.

Commissioner Maselli reminded the Commission that the 2 year phase in plan included a large bump this year.

Chief Spera stated that the budget is according to actuals. Personnel raises and contract costs should be expected to increase as the cost of living grows. When that line item is removed there is very little left of the budget. He also stated that contracts with the officers are done with the First Selectman.

Vice Chairman Savino stated that the personnel budget will continue to grow to adequately provide services for Old Saybrook. He stated there is not a lot of room to adjust. He also reminded the Commission that the Police Officers just settled a 3 year contract that expires June 2016 and that the Dispatchers contract expires this year. The 2.5% raises were chosen by the first selectman.

Commissioner Burnham then asked what the vacation replacement 2 year plan was and what type of increase should be expected in the coming years.

Chief Spera stated first that on page 3 of the budget booklet Sergeant Smith was incorrectly listed as a patrolman, he then said that through union negotiations personal days have been reduced from three to zero. He stated that an increase can be expected due to two reasons. One, hitting tenure includes additional time and two, contractual raises. Chief Spera also stated that the median can go up or down.

Secretary Stuart asked what the concrete figures of actual backfilled shifts were.

Chief Spera stated that Police Officers used to be able to carry over 10 vacation days but that has since stopped. As of July 1st 284 shifts have to be backfilled. Each police officer is encouraged to use their time over the course of the year. Per union contract they can cash out 10 days with no notice. That cash out is paid at straight time. Chief Spera stated there is no specific data on the number of backfilled shifts because it varies. He gave an example of a School Resource Officer position needing to be backfilled during the academic year but not during summer break. He also explained that the backfilled shifts have never been fully funded.

Secretary Stuart then stated that the Commission needs to know what is actually being backfilled.

Chief Spera stated there really is no accurate way to track. He also explained that with the healthcare plan change many of the Police Officers have been cashing out time to finalize their personal healthcare accounts.

Commissioner Burnham asked Chief Spera if he replaces 90% of shifts or 2/3's, and if he can give her a rough estimate.

Chief Spera responded that he replaces about 95% of shifts.

Commissioner Maselli brought up the fact that requested vacation can be planned ahead.

Chief Spera stated that this was correct but the Police Officers are only required to give 1 work week notice for vacation requests.

Commissioner Dunlap asked Chief Spera how he records the number of shifts filled per day.

Chief Spera stated the schedule records the numbers of shifts filled per day.

Commissioner Dunlap asked how many shifts a patrolman works per year.

Chief Spera stated that patrolmen work different schedules with some working more administrative days due to the hours spent outside the office. He takes the work days minus vacation and sick days to calculate days worked.

Commissioner Burnham suggested to Chief Spera to work on future contracts not having so many different work schedules.

Chief Spera replied that he operates on the paid 40 hours, work 40 hours schedule.

Vice Chairman Savino reasoned that schedules change and sometimes you can't plan for sick or vacation time.

Secretary Stuart asked Chief Spera if he budgets for all sick days to be used.

Chief Spera replied no. He budgets for 50% of time earned and while that was not sufficient enough for last year, he stated that he has requested the same for this upcoming year.

Secretary Stuart asked where would Det. Sergeant Heiney's cash out come from.

Chief Spera stated that Det. Sergeant Heiney's cash out comes from a specific town retirement account and not from the operation budget.

While looking over the canine unit line items Chairman Finch stated that a lot of the supplies are donated. The dollars set aside are per union contract but that most of the food and miscellaneous items are donated by residents.

Commission Dunlap asked if there was any data to support the value of the canine division.

Chief Spera stated that he doesn't have hard data but there are situations where they have been valuable. The strangulation chase, missing children, narcotics searches etc. He stated the canines are a valuable piece of equipment that enhances the Department.

Commissioner Maselli asked if the dogs are constantly with the Police Officers.

Chief Spera replied yes and that it is his goal to have 2 dogs constantly overlapping so the Department is never lacking. One is currently young in age and just finished getting certified and the other is older. The objective is to always have a healthy rotation going with the canine unit he said.

Vice Chairman Savino stated that the canine unit serves as a dual purpose, search and detection.

Chairman Finch stated that dogs with the state police have two different specific dogs, one for patrol and one for narcotics, Old Saybrook's canines do both.

Commissioner Dunlap asked if there was a report detailing overtime and extra personnel.

Chief Spera stated that on page 6 of the booklet overtime and extra personnel information can be found.

Commissioner Burnham asked if police officers earn overtime when backfilling vacation and sick time.

Chief Spera replied that overtime is earned when backfilling vacation and sick time during extra holiday staffing and other miscellaneous items. While there is no formal coding system in place the town tracks what we spend in each category he said.

Secretary Stuart asked what shifts were backfilled.

Chief Spera stated that the number varies.

Secretary Stuart asked for the number of backfilled shifts.

Chief Spera stated that there is no exact number since shifts are backfilled based upon liabilities.

Vice Chairman Savino stated that things are not coded dog call, torchlight parade and so on.

Secretary Stuart requested that next year an actual number of backfilled shifts is given.

Chief Spera responded that 284 days were backfilled out of vacation and personal day replacement.

Commissioner Burnham questioned if these 284 shifts were real liability.

Commissioner Maselli stated that due to backfill liability it is nearly impossible to get actuals on these line items.

Commissioner Dunlap asked if extra personnel are added at Chief Spera's discretion.

Chief Spera stated that he chooses to add additional officers on days such as New Year's Eve, 4th of July, Memorial Day etc. While he has not increased the number of shifts, the rate of each 8 hour shift, has gone up. He also stated that overtime is not done in 8 hour time blocks. He stated that a retirement mid-year must be replaced and shifts backfilled with extra personnel. He also stated that there are many variables and that a budget is a spending strategy.

Vice Chairman Savino asked how many Police Officers are eligible for retirement.

Chief Spera stated that 4 to 5 Police Officers are currently eligible.

Commissioner Burnham proceeded to ask about the special assignments line item.

Chief Spera stated this line item is reserved for officers who are assigned to perform duties in addition to their scheduled work day. He gave an example of when the firearms trailer was brought to the Police Station it took police officers 2 hours to go through the course.

Vice Chairman Savino stated that the Emergency Medical Responders just took a course that was done in house at no cost to the Police Department.

Chairman Finch stated that if the Police Department was to stop in house training consider how much more would need to be added to the budget.

Commissioner Dunlap stated that when you add up all the various line items it equals another man year.

Chief Spera stated that these dollars are not budgeted for extra bodies and the money is not equal to an extra police officer.

Commissioner Burnham stated that it is the obligation of the Commission to make the proposed budget work.

Commissioner Burnham stated that there was an Informational Technology position added.

Chief Spera stated that while the line item is new to the budget, the position is not. The Police Department is unique in where they need an Information Technology person available around the clock. It is currently filled by retired Sergeant Gardner who is doing an amazing job but the Department needs a person specific to the job. Chief Spera stated he has no problem with the town hiring a full time person and joining forces with them as long as the person can fulfill the needs of the Police Department. Currently there is no town initiative in place for an Information Technology department.

Commissioner Burnham asked if Sergeant Gardner retires will it be required to fill the Information Technology position with a police officer.

Chief Spera stated no, it is not required to be a law enforcement officer but a desired knowledge of police operations would be preferred.

Secretary Stuart asked the Commission to back a town wide Information Technology position.

Chief Spera stated that when the proposed budget is delivered to the First Selectman there is an option to remove the line item or help fund the town information technology hire but he stressed that the town hire must be able to fulfill the Police Department requirements. The job currently has no healthcare benefits.

Commissioner Burnham asked if there was an official proposal made to the town for Sergeant Gardner to continue the job town wide.

Chief Spera said, in his opinion, there is a stigma of cops controlling the information technology in town hall and he believes that's why Sergeant Gardner was never offered a town wide position.

Secretary Stuart indicated he would love it if Sergeant Gardner was the person.

Secretary Stuart stated he favors the hiring a town wide Information Technology employee as long as the Department needs will always be served.

Chief Spera agreed and reminded the Commission that no one was dedicated to the position until Sergeant Gardner and as the Department evolves there will be a greater need.

Secretary Stuart then proposed that a town Information Technology employee position is presented to the First Selectman.

Chief Spera agreed as long as the town can select someone who can meet the demands for the Police Department.

Commissioner Burnham stated that for the time being the line item should remain in the proposed budget.

Chairman Finch requested to add to motion a town wide Information Technology position.

Chief Spera stated that he wanted to discuss Building and Ground maintenance. Currently there are 2 custodians who maintain the facility. Presently one works 25 hours a week and he cleans, directs traffic, takes cars to the dealership for maintenance etc. The other works 15 hours a week and keeps the office clean. They both are paid out of the town hall maintenance department budget. Chief Spera stated there are two options with the new facility, keep the system we currently have and just increase hours or look into hiring a cleaning company for certain areas.

Chairman Finch asked who presently takes care of the outside ground maintenance in the current building.

Chief Spera responded that currently the owners maintain the lawns but his staff trims the bushes and sands and salts the sidewalks and driveways.

Chairman Finch asked if the town crew will mow the lawn at the new facility.

Chief Spera answered yes and said that the lawn mowing will not impact the budget. Currently he has not reached out to a cleaning service to acquire an estimate but this is a line item that can be increased.

Commissioner Burnham stated that when Chief Spera changed vehicle maintenance over to mostly warranty work the costs went down.

Chief Spera responded that the lease purchasing agreement cut the original maintenance budget in half. The warranty covers a lot of expenses not including wipers, breaks etc.

Chairman Finch asked the Commission if they had any other miscellaneous item questions.

Vice Chairman Savino questioned the OSHA Requirements line item.

Chief Spera stated that OSHA required the Department to purchase Ebola suits, masks etc.

Chairman Finch stated that OSHA required the Police, Fire, Emergency Management and Ambulance Departments to purchase those items.

Chief Spera agreed and responded that the Police, Fire, Emergency Management and Ambulance Departments jointly purchased a big ticket item that was required. The cost was split between the four Departments and there was no severe impact on one budget.

Chairman Finch asked if there were any more line items to discuss. He stated the state will continue to impose demands and new laws that they do not fund. He said it is very hard to manage a budget with regulations and court hearings changing every couple of months. It's a challenge every year he admitted.

Chief Spera brought up the fact that he has reduced steps for Police Officers. This means Top Step salaries are not what they used to be which resulted in a substantial savings for the Department.

Vice Chairman Savino asked the Chief of Police if he was taking an increase in pay this year.

Chief Spera stated that no, he is not taking a pay raise.

Secretary Stuart suggested forwarding to the First Selectman and the Board of Finance the Information Technology position for the town as long as the person fits the department's needs.

Commissioner Maselli made a motion to adopt the 2015-2016 Operating Budget in the amount of \$3,324,790.00 with the understanding that if the town wants to hire a town wide Information Technology person it must meet the police departments needs and the \$45,000.00 budgeted would be revisited.

Commissioner Burnham seconded the motion.

The motion to approve the Department of Police Services 2015-2016 Operating Budget was approved with a vote of 6 in favor and 1 against. Commissioner Dunlap opposed.

Commissioner Maselli made a motion to adopt 2015-2016 Capital Budget in the amount of \$94,000.00.

Commissioner Dunlap seconded the motion.

The motion to approve the Department of Police Services 2015-2016 Capital Budget was approved with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.

VI. Comments From the Public

A member of the public thanked the Commission for supporting the police officers and the budget.

A member of the public stated that it was an honor to watch the Commission and Chief Spera work together and he's very happy with the positive outcome.

VII. **Adjournment**

Chairman Finch made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Secretary Stuart. The motion to adjourn the meeting passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.

The next regular Police Commission meeting is scheduled for January 26, 2015 at 7:00pm in the first floor conference room at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.