

**OLD SAYBROOK POLICE COMMISSION**

Special Meeting

August 4, 2015

MINUTES

A special meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, August 4, 2015 at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

**Present:** Chairman Finch, Secretary Stuart, Commissioners 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 7:00 PM and led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance

**II. Comments from the Public**

Chairman Finch prefaced public comment by stating that tonight's meeting is a special meeting regarding specific purposes that are listed on the agenda. He requested that all public comments pertain to the August 4, 2015 Special Meeting agenda, he asked that comments pertaining to anything not on the agenda be held off until the Regular Meeting scheduled for August 24, 2015.

Mary Hansen questioned what the call to this meeting was. She stated that since most of the meeting is taking place in Executive Session the public is unable to comment on anything.

Chairman Finch replied a majority of the meeting will take place in Executive Session but should the public have a comments regarding tonight's agenda they are more than welcome to speak. Should a member of the public have a comment pertaining to items not on tonight's agenda they are welcome to attend the Police Commission Regular Meeting scheduled for August 24, 2015.

Mary Hansen stated that meeting will probably be cancelled.

Steve Beuller stated that he supports the Police Department, the Chief, the Officers and the School Resource Officers. He has three children currently in the school system and one more on the way and he is grateful his children are safe every day at school. He asked the Commission to please continue to support the SRO Program and fill the vacancies.

Colin Heffernan questioned if all personnel issues in executive session are to fill vacancies or if anything regarding personnel issues can be brought up? He questioned if an Officer retires should the spot be filled?

Chairman Finch stated that the 2015-2016 Budget allows the hiring of new Officers. The Police Department is currently down a number of Officers which is negativity impacting the budget and the operation.

Colin Heffernan questioned if the number of Officers down is a loss or an opportunity of cost savings.

Chairman Finch responded that question is for budget season, not for now. The Police Department has vacancies that need to be filled.

Colin Heffernan asked why can't that question be discussed now?

Chairman Finch stated that the Commission cannot add to the agenda tonight as it is a special meeting.

Colin Heffernan asked if the Commission would be having a discussion if resignations should not be filled in executive session.

Steven Beuller stated that this is not a debate, this is public comment. You state your comment then you sit down.

Colin Heffernan stated that this is a dangerous blurring of lines.

Chairman Finch thanked Colin Heffernan for his comments.

Kevin Shay states he supports the Department. A lot of residents support and feel strongly about the School Resource Officers and it is a positive thing for both kids and parents. In light of recent events it's nice to feel like we are doing something positive for the community with Police Officers.

Chairman Finch stated that the Commission has a limited time frame to provide SRO's for the upcoming school year. Hopefully some issues will get resolved tonight he said.

Mary Hansen asked why there were no regularly scheduled meetings since April.

Chairman Finch asked her if she had a comment regarding tonight's agenda.

Mary Hansen stated that there are important items that should have been discussed previously but meetings have been cancelled for lack of quorum.

Chairman Finch thanked Mary for her comments and stated that there were a lot of reasons why things didn't happen sooner.

Renee Shipee asked when Patrolman Smith and Patrolman Kiako resigned.

Commissioner Maselli stated that Chief will let us know the dates.

Renee Shipee replied she would have liked to see the School Resource Officer search start sooner if the Police Department knew about the vacancies early on.

Chairman Finch stated that Chief Spera will let us know the dates and the process time frame.

#### **Executive Reports**

Chief Spera reported that on May 21, 2015 Patrol Officer Larry Smith notified him that he would be leaving the Department after almost 14 years of service. Chief Spera then passed around to the Commission Officer Smith's email of resignation that he sent the Department and his exit interview.

Chief Spera reminded the Commission that Patrolman Trainee Cerra left as Chief previously reported at the last Commission meeting.

After Officer Smith and Trainee Cerra resigned, SRO Officer Tanner approached Chief regarding her interest in becoming a full time officer.

At the time the Chief started the SRO process Officer Kiako came to Chief and advised him that he would be taking a full time position at Electric Boat as a senior engineering supervisor. The Chief stated that Officer Kiako will be sorely missed and was an incredible asset to the Police Department, School System and the community.

The Chief reported that last Friday Officer Forte advised him that he was resigning to return to a career in the banking industry. Patrolman Forte had been with the department for almost 2 years. Patrolman Forte like Patrolman Kiako has asked to stay on as a per diem employee.

Commissioner Dunlap asked if Officer Forte was the tall gentleman who had wanted to be a Police Officer as a child.

Chief Spera responded that yes he was the one who left a finance job to fulfill his lifelong dream. Chief stated that Officer Forte would be taking a job in finance where he would be able to work from home three days a week, have nights, weekends and holidays off and a more regular schedule which is better for his family life.

Chief Spera stated that the Department is now down four full time positions.

Commissioner Dunlap asked how many hours a month does a per diem employee look for.

Chief Spera stated that usually per diem employees work one to two shifts a month. The per diem Officers are extremely helpful in critical incidents and are useful for the Department in shift coverage and filling in.

Commissioner Dunlap asked how many hours would Officer Kiako be looking for.

Chief Spera stated that Officer Kiako needs to begin his new career and settle into a routine before he can commit to any extra shifts.

Chief Spera reported that Officer Mercer also retired for the second time, formally leaving his per diem position with the department. He is now receiving his Social Security that precludes him from maintaining his position within the department.

Chief Spera reported that the per diem dispatcher pool has diminished. Per diem dispatchers save the department money when backfilling shifts. In fact the budget for replacing dispatcher vacation, personal and sick days is based on a replacement ratio of fifty percent use of per diem employees and fifty percent use of full time employees working overtime shifts. Chief Spera advised that Lieutenant Roche would be filling the Commission in regarding the process.

Lieutenant Roche stated that open positions were advertised and while many applied only nine people came to the station to take the written test. Five people passed the written test and the oral interviews are scheduled to take place on August 10<sup>th</sup>.

There is no definitive end date for the process but the Commission will be kept informed. The applicants still have to go through a background investigation and a medical exam.

Once hired the per diem dispatchers will have to be State and nationally certified and trained on the new 911 system. The Chief reported that the department will be switching to the new system soon and will hold training for all employees.

Commissioner Maselli asked if the department budget permitted for twenty five full time police officers and based on his calculations the department only had twenty one full time police officers and is also short per diem police officers.

Chief Spera responded that Commission Maselli was correct.

Commissioner Maselli asked that even if the department was authorized to have twenty five full time police officers has there ever been a time during your tenure of chief that all full time officer position have been filled.

Chief Spera stated that while the Department is authorized to have twenty five officers due to retirement, injury and illness there has never been a full roster.

Commissioner Dunlap asked if the three School Resource Officers are in addition to the twenty five full time Officers.

Chief Spera stated that currently the three school resource positions were staffed with two per diem and one full time police officer. He is proposing due to a shortage of full time personnel and his strong desire to maintain the SRO program that all SRO positions be staffed with per diem police officers.

The Chief went on to state that having part time/per diem officer staff the SRO positions is fiscally and operationally sound. Per diem employees are at will employees that do not get sick time, vacation time or holiday pay. Those that are assigned to SRO positions work the academic year but are permitted to work extra shifts in accordance with the current bargaining agreement. When per diem officers backfill open shifts it saves the town money.

Chairman Finch stated that this allows more money to fill in other times with open slots. Once the Department is back at full staffing levels the Commission has the opportunity to reevaluate the three part time SRO positions and decided if they want to make one full time again.

The Chief commented that he has reviewed the memo from the First Selectman concerning this topic and has also had conversations with him. The Chief strongly suggested that the new model of having only per diem police officers staff the SRO positions be evaluated during the budget process. He stated that he believes that this new model will enhance operations while reducing costs.

Commissioner Dunlap stated that having three per diem police officers serve as SRO Officers seemed to make sense.

The Chief commented that due to the recent resignations full time staff would be negatively impacted for a significant period of time. Should the commission choose to fill any vacancies with uncertified people they would have to attend the police academy and complete mandatory field training which takes a combined 36 weeks.

There for if an uncertified person gets hired they would attend the January 2016 academy and they would not become an asset to the department until sometime after Labor Day. The best case scenario would be the October 2015 class. After twenty six weeks at the academy they train in the field for ten more week. The new hire is not elevated to full time use within the Department until thirty six weeks after academy start date. The Department is currently down four full time Officers and Chief Spera stated that he wouldn't be surprised to see one more retirement come within the next couple of months. The Department doesn't have enough bodies to maintain the two part time and one full time SRO positions. The SRO program is incredibly important to him and he feels that staffing the SRO positions with per diem employees is the best solution to maintain the program and the primary mission of the department.

### **III. Executive Session**

Chief Spera respectfully requested that he, Lieutenant Roche and Commission Clerk Jennifer Damato be allowed to attend Executive Session.

**Commissioner Maselli made a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of interviewing candidates for the position of Patrolman. The motion was seconded by Secretary Stuart. The motion passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against. Chief Spera, Lieutenant Roche and Commission Clerk Jennifer Damato were invited to participate in the session.**

The Commission Entered into Executive Session at 7:51PM

Patrolman Candidate Allyson Tanner entered into Executive Session at 8:05PM

Patrolman Candidate Allyson Tanner exited Executive Session at 8:21PM

Patrolman Candidate Stephanie Milardo entered into Executive Session at 8:23PM

Patrolman Candidate Stephanie Milardo exited Executive Session at 8:34PM

Patrolman Candidate Solomon Hardy entered into Executive Session at 8:41PM

Patrolman Candidate Solomon Hardy exited Executive Session at 8:50PM

Per Diem Patrolman Candidate Lawrence Rooney entered into Executive Session at 9:12PM

Per Diem Patrolman Candidate Lawrence Rooney exited Executive Session at 9:25PM

Per Diem Patrolman Candidate Steven Crowley entered into Executive Session at 9:37PM

Per Diem Patrolman Candidate Steven Crowley exited Executive Session at 9:46PM

Patrol Sergeant Candidate Philip Ciccone entered into Executive Session at 10:11PM

Patrol Sergeant Candidate Philip Ciccone exited Executive Session at 10:23PM

Patrol Sergeant Candidate Stephen Hackett entered into Executive Session at 10:24PM  
Patrol Sergeant Candidate Stephen Hackett exited Executive Session at 10:40PM

The Commission exited Executive Session at 11:12PM

**IV. Discussion and Action pertaining to the Position of Patrolman.**

Commissioner Maselli made a motion to change Patrolman Allyson Tanner's status from part time Police Officer to full time. Chairman Finch seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.

Commissioner Maselli made a motion to promote Dispatcher Milardo and Community Service Officer Hardy to the position of Patrolman Trainee upon the successful completion of the hiring process and at a date selected by the Chief of Police. Commissioner Dunlap seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.

**V. Discussion and Action pertaining to the Position of Per Diem Patrolman**

Secretary Stuart made a motion to hire Lawrence Rooney and Steven Crowley as Per Diem Police Officers to serve as School Resource Officers pending the successful completion of the hiring process. Chairman Finch seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.

**VI. Discussion and Action pertaining to the Position of Patrol Sergeant**

Commissioner Dunlap made a motion, based upon the test results of the promotional process, to first promote Patrolman Stephen Hackett to the position of Patrol Sergeant and to authorize the Chief of Police to promote Patrolman Philip Ciccone to Patrol Sergeant based on the operational needs of the department. Secretary Stuart seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.

**VII. Public Comment**

Chairman Finch reiterated his request from before stating that Public Comment should pertain to agenda items only tonight.

Steve Beeler stated that while the Commission was in Executive Session he had the opportunity to speak with the candidates and he is very happy with the outcome. They are all great candidates he said and he thanked the Commission for supporting the SRO program and for their time tonight.

An anonymous male stated that tonight's meeting was long but he is very grateful for Commission's support for the School Resource Office Program and feel that the hiring of the Police Officers is a step in the right direction and he hope that continues.

**VIII. Comments from the Chief of Police**

Chief Spera thanked the Commission for their support tonight and stated that he truly values the SRO program and the support to fill full time Police Officer vacancies and the ability to promote personnel to first line leadership positions.

Chief Spera advised the Commission that Detective Sergeant Heiney is still out on extended sick leave. In his absence Lieutenant Roche is supervising the Criminal Investigation Division. Chief Spera reminded the Commission that he assigned the LT several months ago to do a review of the CI Division specifically assessing the work load, staffing levels and schedule. The Chief comments that he expects the report to be delivered to him from the LT within the next month.

Chief Spera reported that the Department is enjoying the new facility but that there are some warranty issues that are not unusual with new construction.

The stated that the Commission should be aware that the epoxy floor in the evidence and detentions area has failed and is causing bubbles that eventually and burst and emit a yellow substance. Downes Construction is aware of the issue and they have come to take core samples of the floor to determine which subcontractor will be responsible for the repair. Most likely the effected areas will have to be closed while the floor is redone. The Chief reported that the HAVC system is currently not working property due to the face that no humidity controls were placed in the system. Downes Construction is also currently working on resolving this issue. The civil engineer has determined that certain areas of the parking lot pavement does not meet specification and will be fixed in the coming months. Finally the Chief reported there are ridges in the floor areas that lie above the raised access flooring, this will cause the flooring in all the executive offices and other areas in the building to be redone. Downes is addressing all issues and the Department is working hard with seeking resolutions for all matters.

Chief Spera is very eager to have an open house so that the public can view the new facility however he is very hesitant to have an open house until all the warranty issues are rectified. He assured the Commission that once the facility is truly ready he would be organizing an Open House. He added that he did place an article with pictures of the new facility in the Saybrook Events Magazine so that citizens could get a glimpse of the inside of the new building.

Commissioner Maselli asked if the Building Committee is still meeting and supporting the resolution of the issues.

Chief Spera reported that First Selectman Fortuna and the Chairman of the Building Committee, Dan Moran are both aware of all the issues.

Commissioner Maselli asked if the Building Committee has met.

Chief Spera said that the Building Committee has not met in sometime in person but that he includes Chairman Moran and First Selectman Fortuna in all of his written correspondence with Downes Construction.

Chief Spera wanted to publically thank the two canine officers, Patrolman Ziolkovski and Patrolman Miller, for their commitment to the program and their willingness to do what is best for the Department. The Chief reported that due to the Board of Finances additional 45,000 budget reduction that he was going to have to suspend and possibly eliminated one canine team. Patrolman Ziolkovski and Patrolman Miller agreed to a contractual concession reworking how they get compensated for the

feeding and grooming of their canine partners. This concession that was reviewed by the town's labor attorney and approved by First Selectman Fortuna saves the town 10,000 to 12,000 a year. The Chief comment that this is just another example of the level of commitment that Police Officers have to the department.

Chief Spera asked Lieutenant Roche to brief the Commission on the current patrolman hiring process.

Lieutenant Roche reported that there is a fewer number of applicants that the department normally has at this stage of the process. Currently there are eighty seven people signed up to take the test. There is one more month to apply and he expects an additional twenty to thirty people to sign up. The written exam is scheduled for September 1<sup>st</sup>. The Chief reported that he will be using this hiring process to fill the remaining vacancy and any other vacancies that should occur before the end of the year.

Chief Spera stated that the Department is looking to fill one more vacancy possibly two should someone retire.

Chief Spera stated that the Department is actively seeking certified officers to fill current and vacant positions. He stated that priority would be given to certified applicants who meet department standards.

Commissioner Dunlap asked if there were any candidates that currently applied.

Chief Spera stated that as they apply the Lieutenant prioritized their applications and invites them in to take a written exam.

Chief Spera advised the Commission on a housekeeping matter. That the practice of reviewing minutes at regular monthly meetings and posting them online would be discontinued. Minutes will now be posted online with 7 days of all public meeting and then will be reviewed at the regular scheduled meetings of the Police Commission and amended or approved at that time. Additionally all motions will be posted within 48 hours if the minutes are not published within that amount of time. With these changes the Chief stated that the minutes are not official until the Commission approves them.

Chief Spera wanted to inform the Commission some Board of Education matters. The first matter concerned an invoice regarding the staffing of gradation. The chief stated that the staffing of gradation was not necessary for the graduation event itself but rather for the traffic direction on RT 1 before and after the ceremony. The Chief stated that many years ago the department billed for these services and that the amount billed was included in reports of in kind services to the state of CT by the Board of Education. The Chief stated that he has rescinded the invoice that was only issued due to unavoidable budget overruns and will include it in the in kind services report that he files with our Board of Education. The second matter concerns a community service office directing traffic in the parking lot in the middle school before and after school. The chief stated that due to the BOF additional 45,000 reduction he was forced to prioritize core services of the department which sadly do not include directing traffic in private parking lots. While the Chief felt like this was still an important service to provide he asked that the Board of Education pay for the exact cost of maintaining that service. However this request was made prior to the resignation of several employees which has changed the fiscal forecast for the fiscal year. There for the service of directing traffic in the parking lot in the middle school will continue as normal and will be reviewed during the year.



This important safety enhancement is something the Department is pleased to provide and a significant Community Service that the Police Department is happy to offer.

Chief Spera stated that the Department has responded to several critical incidents over the past few weeks and that all Department employees have performed admirably. He stated that he is consistently impressed with their professionalism and dedication. The Chief stated that ninety percent of all their work is very personal and private to those involved. He stated that while he hopes people never need the services of the Department, the Commission can be assured that when needed the Department's employees take great care when performing their duties, especially in sensitive situations.

**IX. Comments and/or concerns from Commissioners**

Chairman Finch stated that he recently became ill and his wife had to call 911. He wanted to go on the record thanking the Police Department and the Old Saybrook Ambulance Association. The services he received were on a personal level, were very professional, and he cannot say enough good things about both Departments.

**X. Adjournment**

**Commissioner Maselli made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Secretary Stuart. The motion to adjourn the meeting passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.**

*The next regular Police Commission meeting is scheduled for August 24, 2015 at 7:00pm in the first floor conference room at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.*