

## OLD SAYBROOK POLICE COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

January 25, 2015

MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, January 25, 2016 at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

**Present:** Chairman Stuart, Vice Chairman Von Dassel, Secretary Moran and Commissioners Burnham, Maselli and Coppes. Chief Spera and Lieutenant Roche were present from the Department of Police Services.

This meeting was recorded (video & audio) by the Town of Old Saybrook.

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

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

- II. Discussion and Possible Action on affirming the Election of Commission Officers as recommended by Legal Counsel.

Chairman Stuart stated that since the election of Officers took place during a special meeting Legal Counsel has advised that the Police Commission should take a second vote tonight at the regular meeting to reconfirm previous actions.

**Commissioner Coppes made a motion to accept the November 30, 2015 Special Meeting election of Officers. Secretary Moran seconded the motion. The motion to approve the election of Officers passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.**

### III. Minutes

**Commissioner Maselli made a motion to approve the November 30, 2015 Special Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cooper. The motion to approve the November 30, 2015 Special Meeting Minutes passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.**

Commissioner Cooper stated that he did not vote in favor of the Budget at the January 8, 2016 Special Meeting.

Chairman Stuart stated that he asked for any abstentions.

Commissioner Cooper stated that he didn't respond when Chairman Stuart asked for any abstentions.

Chairman Stuart asked in the future that everyone make sure to speak up so that the correct vote is recorded.

**Commissioner Maselli made a motion to approve the January 8, 2016 Special Meeting Minutes with the correction that Commissioner Cooper abstained from voting for the 2016-2017 Department of Police Services Operating and Capital Budget. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Coppes. The motion to approve the January 8, 2016 Special Meeting Minutes with the correction passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.**

IV. **Comments from the Public**

There were no comments from the Public.

V. **Discussion and Possible Action for Personnel Expenses in Preparation for the 2017-2018 Budget Proposal.**

Chairman Stuart stated that he would like move agenda item number 8 to number 5 and wanted to propose to the Police Commission that they ask Chief for an excel spreadsheet to show true data as to when shifts are backfilled. He would like to see a running log that way the Police Commission knows what is actually being used and where money is being spent. For some of the other items he would like a breakdown on expenditures and have it reported in another spreadsheet.

Commissioner Cooper asked Chairman Stuart if he is looking for a detailed list of expenses or something more general.

Chairman Stuart replied that is up to the Commission to decide.

Commissioner Cooper stated that since town hall cuts the checks for the Police Department, the accounting department should be able to give the Commission a list of what was spent by account.

Commissioner Maselli asked if Chairman Stuart was looking for personnel data or expenses and supplies data.

Chairman Stuart stated he is looking for true personnel data.

Commissioner Maselli asked how the data that Chairman Stuart is requesting differ from the budget booklet.

Chairman Stuart stated that he would like to be able to say there were X number of shifts that were backfilled.

Commissioner Burnham asked why the Commission needs to know that information. The Commission doesn't manage the Police Department, the Chief of Police does that.

Chairman Stuart stated that he is not asking to oversee what shifts Chief Spera backfills he is just suggesting that if the Commission can keep track then they would have actual real numbers for next year's budget.

Commissioner Moran stated that it's not fair to overspend the budget at the end of the year when the Commission doesn't have any data to back up the expenditures.

Commissioner Burnham stated that the Commission does have data.

Chairman Stuart stated that he would like to know how many shift have to be backfilled. He is not saying that Chief isn't giving the Commission real numbers he would just like to see a running spreadsheet.

Commissioner Maselli stated that he was confused. He asked the Chief to explain the spreadsheet that was included in their packets.

The Chief stated that the Department has been keeping this type of information in the regular course of business since Then Secretary Stuart asked for it last year. Because this is the new Commission's First Regular Meeting he included the spread sheet in the meeting packet in order to show Commissioners what data is being kept with respect to the personnel line items and determine if Commissioners want the report monthly.

The Police Commission went back and forth on what they would like to see on the spreadsheet.

Chief Spera asked Chairman Stuart if this spreadsheet was what he was looking for.

Chairman Stuart stated yes.

The Commission had questions regarding the spreadsheet.

Commissioner Cooper asked if the vacation line item was backfilled shifts or vacation time that Officers actually took.

Chief Spera stated that it was both vacation replacement and vacation cash out.

Commissioner Coppes asked for a total of everything stating that it would give him a better sense of numbers.

Commissioner Moran asked how to tell the difference in what shifts are backfilled and what an actual overtime shift is.

Chief stated that everything is in the budget booklet. Each line item is described in the booklet. He read the overtime line item description which states that overtime not used to backfill patrol shifts

Commissioner Moran asked what the percentage of backfill shifts are.

Commissioner Maselli asked Commissioner Moran to explain a backfilled shift.

Commissioner Moran was confused as to what a backfilled shift was.

Chief suggested holding a workshop on processing payroll.

Chairman Stuart stated that he wasn't sure if the Commission needed that.

Chief Spera stated that there are many new members to the Police Commission and that this meeting represented the First Regular Meeting of the Commission. New members may have a lack of operational understanding of the Department, which should be expected.

Commissioner Cooper asked Chief Spera if he can avoid using a sergeant to backfill a patrolman position.

Chief Spera stated that he tries to use the lowest cost employee but he follows the bargaining unit agreements.

Secretary Moran asked if sick time is always backfilled and how long Officers are called in for an overtime shift.

Chief Spera stated that employees can call out sick at any time. Currently, the Old Saybrook Police Department does not have a sick time abuse problem. The sick call out is relayed to the on duty supervisor and evaluated. Each shift must have a minimum three Officers, however staffing should be at four officers for each Day and Evening Shift. If something has to be backfilled the Department tries to find someone immediately. The Department normally does not backfill if 3 Police Officers are on duty.

Commissioner Cooper asked about staffing levels. He wanted to know the number of positions vacant.

Chief stated that there are 25 sworn Officers. 4 are currently in police academy.

Chairman Stuart stated that Chief Spera keeps the Commission up to date as to the 4 Officer trainees. The Commission is advised when graduation occurs and when the trainees complete field training and so on.

Commissioner Maselli stated that Chief Spera also lets the Police Commission know when someone is injured and if they will be out for any period of time.

Chief Spera stated that since 4 trainees are in the academy their shifts are vacant and need to be backfilled. The backfilled shifts would come out of the Extra Personnel line item.

Secretary Moran asked who the 4 in the academy were because no one is listed as a trainee in the budget.

Chief Spera named the 4 Patrolman Trainees attending the academy right now. He stated that they are listed in the budget book as Patrolman due to the fact that the budget book starts July 2016 and that is what their titles will be at that time.

Commissioner Cooper asked how many weeks of school the trainees attend.

Chief Spera stated 26 weeks and then an addition 10 weeks of field training.

Chairman Stuart stated that he was also asked to bring up off budget accounts.

Commissioner Maselli asked if Chairman Stuart meant the expenses and supplies. He was under the impression the Commission was discussion the Operating Budget.

Chairman Stuart stated that he meant off budget account. The Chief regularly gives the balances but he wanted to ask the Commission if they wanted a more detailed accounting of off budgets.

Commissioner Coppes asked what the total number of dollars were in the off budget accounts.

Chairman Stuart responded that Chief Spera will give that information.

Commissioner Burnham stated that off budget does not affect tax dollars.

Commissioner Cooper disagreed stating that the equipment used is paid for and maintained with tax dollars.

Commissioner Burnham stated that when a contractor hires a Police Officer for an outside job the amount that is charged to the contractors covers the expenses.

The Commissioners discussed how outside jobs and billing was done.

Secretary Moran stated that the Commission should just ask Chief Spera to explain outside jobs.

Commissioner Coppes asked why outside jobs are off budget.

Chief Spera stated that if the outside jobs were included in the budget the town mill rate would be increased because we would unnecessarily be taxing citizens. He passed out a sheet that included all the off budget accounts for the Town of Old Saybrook. The Chief also noted that the Police Department is not the only department with off budget accounts.

Chairman Stuart stated that he would like to table the talk of off budget account for right now.

## VI. **Executive Reports**

### A. Financial

#### 1. 15-16 Operating Budget

Chief Spera stated that he will continue to give an updated expenses and supplies spreadsheet every regular Police Commission meeting. He would like to show the difference from the last time the Police Commission meeting so the Commission can see the amount of dollars being spent, if any. He stressed that the Commission needs to understand that each line item has detail to it. The Police Department has backup spreadsheets for every line item.

Commissioner Cooper asked if the Police Department keeps their own set of books along with Town Hall.

Chief Spera stated that is correct and each month it is compared to what Town Hall sends over.

Commissioner Cooper stated that he was not used to companies keeping track of their own expenses and supplies.

Chairman Stuart stated this system works better for the Department. The Chief runs the department on a budget and as the Police Department is responsible for submitting their own bills it makes sense so they can keep track of where costs are being taken out of.

Chief Spera stated that at the regular meetings he would go over any concerning line items. He has already let the Commission know about the overages in the Misc. Small Equipment, First Responder Medical Equipment and Emergency Communications line items and given detail as to why those line items are over. He also added again that the Extra Personnel line item will be overspent this year while the salary line item will not be due to the replacement of full time staff.

Commissioner Cooper asked for a print date on the expenses and supplies spreadsheet.

Chief Spera stated there is print date on the bottom of the page. The expenses and supplies line item is very small compared to the personnel line items. Gasoline is one of the biggest and it is purchased by the First Selectman's office.

Commissioner Cooper stated that he hopes the First Selectman took advantage of the decreasing gasoline rate and locked in at a good price.

Chief Spera stated that yes he did and he locked in for next year as well.

## 2. 16-17 budget process

Chief Spera advised the Commission on the 16-17 budget process. The booklets that were handed out to each Commissioner reflects the changes from the last meeting. The workshop between the Police Commission and the Board of Selectman will take place on February 2 at 4:30 PM and all Commissioners are welcome. The Chief of Police and the Chairman will answer any questions that the Board of Selectmen has on the budget. One more budget booklet will be given to the Police Commissioners should the Board of Selectmen make any adjustments. By the time of the Board of Finance meeting all Commissions will have updated budget booklet. The Board of Finance booklet will include the statistical data that Chief Spera presented to the Police Commission during his budget presentation. Secretary Moran asked for copy of slide show, Chief Spera handed that to him. He advised that the meeting is available to watch on YouTube and he cautioned the Commission stating that the slides alone do not accurately represent the presentation given.

Secretary Moran stated that he felt the slide were very informative.

Chief Spera stated that a few Board of Finance members have asked him to include that arrest demographic data in their budget booklets in hopes that others would find the data informative too.

## 3. Report of Off Budget Account

Chief Spera referenced the Town's off budgets account spreadsheet. Off budget accounting is a practice that the Town uses. The accounts are part of the annual audit. The report that he handed out is from the Town Treasurer. He told the Commission that he looks at the accounts that have to do with the Police Department and normally reports the ones that are stable. He gives the balances every month and when there is a change the Commission is aware of why. He stated that he would like to continue the practice but hand papers to the Commissioners that have the previous months balance and the current balance. The only account that the Chief doesn't speak about is the outside services account. That account fluctuates daily. Invoices are sent out and money comes in multiple times a week. Outside jobs is managed in QuickBooks. Chief stated that he can give a summary print out once a year to the Police Commission.

Commissioner Burnham asked if outside jobs have a season fluctuation.

Chief stated that normally yes, but there has been so many outside jobs this year due to tree work, utility work and more. He believes that they will see a decline in work soon though.

Chief asked if the Commission would like an off budget account presentation.

Commissioner Coopes stated that Chief Spera should do it when convenient. The Commission has to see the off budget accounts to understand them.

Commissioner Cooper watched the off budget presentation that Chief Spera did for the Board of Finance as he was suggested to and he stated that it was a very good presentation but he asked how to get rid of the accounts that have been there forever.

Chief Spera stated that some are regulated by state statute and can only be spent a certain way. He added that he doesn't believe in spending money just because it's there.

Chairman Stuart stated that next meeting the Commission would like to see a list of off budget accounts along with a breakdown and description on each of the accounts.

Chief Spera suggested a workshop on off budget accounts.

Chairman Stuart requested a description of all the accounts that relate to the Police Department.

Secretary Moran stated that it is important to know when some of the funds were established.

Chief Spera stated that he may not know the history of some of the accounts as they predate him.

Commissioner Cooper asked about replacing some of the budget items such as Police K-9.

Chief Spera stated that the Board of Finance sought to reduce the Police K-9 budget and private citizens donated money to save the program. This caused some of the tax burden to be relieved. The Police Explorer account used to be an operating expense but now it's totally off budget at no additional cost to the tax payers.

Commissioner Cooper stated that the Explorer program is not part of the Police Operation.

Chief disagreed stating yes it is.

Chairman Stuart added that the Explorer Program is part of the Community Policing Program.

Commissioner Burnham asked if Chief Spera knew the Board of Finance presentation date yet.

Chief Spera stated no.

A. Administrative

1. Personnel Report

Chief Spera stated that the 4 in the Police Academy are doing well.

## 2. Board of Selectman's Appointment to the Law Enforcement Fund Committee

Chief Spera stated that Selectman Conklin was appointed to the Law Enforcement Fund Committee along with Chairman Burnham and Officer Brian Ziolkovski.

Commissioner Burnham stated that she would now reach out to Selectman Conklin and set up a meeting for them to get together.

Commissioner Cooper asked what the purpose of that committee was.

Chief stated that the Law Enforcement Fund Committee was established after the Ray McMurray Fund investigation was concluded.

## 3. Facility Warranty Work

Chief Spera gave an update on the facility warranty work. The bubbling floor replacement has begun in the detention area of the facility. The former home of the Police Department is currently processing and holding prisoners while work in detention continues. The construction company estimates that the repair work will take a month. 6 Custom Drive was leased for one month at the cost of \$1,000.00 to the Town of Old Saybrook.

An issue with the parking lot storm drains has been noticed. Storm drains are rising and falling with the freezing and thawing of the pavement that will be addressed in the future. The Department is waiting to address some of the PA issues and there still are some heating and cooling issues. The gas pump repair went well and all seems to be working again.

Commissioner Cooper asked if the building committee is still active.

Secretary Moran stated that he was waiting to schedule a meeting, as he is the Chairman of the Police Building Committee, after the floor was replaced.

## 4. Legal Traffic Authority Briefing

### 1. Crosswalk Request / Elm Street / Research Parkway

It was stated that the First Selectman sent a letter to Pathway Lighting regarding their crosswalk request. Until the road becomes a town road nothing can be done regarding a crosswalk.

Secretary Moran stated that according to the First Selectman Eversouce is willing to commit resources to accept the road. The estimate for the project to be completed is 6 months.

## VII. Discussion and Possible appointment of a Police Commissioner to serve on the Law Enforcement Personnel Hiring Subcommittee

Chairman Stuart stated that before the election there were three members that had been on a committee to look at the Police Departments hiring process.

Commissioner Cooper asked what the total function of the board was.

Chairman Stuart stated to review the entire hiring process.



Commissioner Burnham stated that the committee reviewed the requirements to necessary to apply to the Old Saybrook Department of Police Services. The end of the hiring process has recently changed so the committee spoke about updating and fine-tuning the questions that are asked during the Commission interviews. That is where the committee left off.

Commissioner Coppes asked why the executive team is not handling the hiring process completely.

Chairman Stuart stated that by statute the Police Commission is in charge of the hiring, firing and promoting and demoting sworn personnel for the Old Saybrook Police Department. The process was tweaked a bit so the Police Commission stayed relevant.

Commissioner Coppes stated that he personally doesn't see any point to the committee. He stated that the Police Commission should take the Chief of Police's recommendation and hire that person after all he knows who is best suited for a career in law enforcement.

No Action was taken for the possible appointment of a Police Commissioner to serve on the Law Enforcement Personnel Hiring Subcommittee.

VIII. **Discussion and Possible Action concerning the Communication from the First Selectman on the appointment of two Police Commissioners to serve on the Board of Selectman's Ah Hoc Committee to study and make recommendations concerning the replacement of the Police Boat.**

Chairman Stuart stated that the First Selectman is looking for 2 Commissioners who would like to serve on an Ah Hoc Committee regarding the Police Boat. Chairman Stuart stated that the meetings will take place during the day and asked the Commissioners to keep that in mind when volunteering.

Commissioner Maselli stated that he finds the fact that meetings will only take place during the day troubling. He feels it doesn't provide the transparency that the public needs and wants on the Police Boat topic.

Commissioners Cooper and Coppes stated that they also have an issue with the meetings taking place during the day.

**Commissioner Burnham made a motion to table the appointments until Chairman Stuart speaks to the First Selectman regarding the concern over meeting times. Commissioner Cooper seconded the motion. The motion to table the two appointments to the Board of Selectman's Ah Hoc Committee until after Chairman Stuart discusses meeting times with the First Selectman passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.**

Chief Spera wanted to clarify the mission of the Ah Hoc Committee. The mission is to decide what type of asset should be used for marine patrol, not to tell the Police Department that they can or cannot patrol the water.

Commissioner Coppes asked if the town of Old Saybrook has to have a marine patrol.

Chief Spera stated no but the town of Old Saybrook has a responsibility to make sure the waters around Old Saybrook are safe. If a problem comes up out on the water The Old Saybrook Police Department or the DEEP need to respond.

Chairman Stuart added that the ad hoc committee cannot control the mission of the marine patrol. The mission of the committee is to look at asset replacement options.

Chairman Burnham stated that the town had the best option when it was awarded a federal grant for a new boat at less than half the retail cost.

#### IX. **Comments from the Public**

Renee Shippee stated that she believe Commissioner Cooper was saying that the off budget outside jobs account is making money from vehicle use and spending gas money but not putting the money back into the operating account. She said that she didn't feel he was being negative but just looking at ways to make the Police Department money.

Chairman Stuart stated that he never took Commissioner Coopers comments as negative.

Renee Shippee stated that the Police Commission should spend money out of that off budget account.

Commissioner Copper stated that was exactly what he was trying to say.

Chairman Stuart stated that when the Commission looks into things maybe there are somethings they can address and get changed.

Brad Thorpe stated that the Commission needs to look into what vendors are being charged for outside jobs. He feels \$8.00 an hour for a vehicle fee is not enough and that the Officers rate should be a blanket flat rate not the individual overtime rates.

Commissioner Cooper agreed stating the billed rate should be a blended rate not overtime rates.

Chairman Stuart stated the Commission can discuss both topics in the future.

Chief Spera stated that the Police Department invoices actual costs. There are many local small businesses that need to hire Police Officers for outside jobs and he doesn't want to price gouge them. The Chief stated that vehicle and administrative fees are added to each invoice. He stated that Mr. Thorpe and he had met twice now on the outside job issue and they were supposed to work together to make a joint presentation. He suggested a future agenda item to review private duty job billing.

Chairman Stuart stated that the Commission will discuss with the Chief at a different meeting.

Brad Thorpe stated that local businesses and big businesses such as Eversource should be paying more. The car rate should be more too. The idling is hard on the engines. He has a real concern on the cars and how many hours they are used. He is also concerned with not charging for workers compensation. The whole thing needs to be reviewed and brought back to the Board of Finance he said.

Brad Thorpe stated that the town accounting department should be handling all the outside jobs. The town should be billing and the town should be receiving the money.

Breckinridge Lindley Smith stated that fees collected by the Police Department should go back into the general fund. There should be better transparency.

Chief Spera and Chairman Stuart stated that fee money is collected and deposited into the general fund not into the specific Police Department funds.

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

Chief Spera stated that Healthy Community, Healthy Youth wanted to come in and give a presentation to the Police Commission regarding a survey that is given to the local youth.

Commissioner Maselli stated that as a Commission member who has been part of previous presentations regarding the survey he found the information to be very interesting and suggested that they present during a regular Police Commission Meeting.

The Police Commission decided to invite Healthy Community, Healthy Youth to come into an upcoming regular Police Commission meeting and present the local youth survey.

Chief Spera stated that he has hosted Leadership and dispatch team meetings and will be holding a detectives one this week.

Chief Spera presented an updated activity report to the Commission. Traditionally the Commission would receive a glorified version of the press releases sent out. What was presented to the Committee was a print out of what the Police Officer's respond to in a month's time. Chief Spera stated that he will present an activity report to the Police Commission once a month moving forward. He will present a report detailing arrest demographics similar to the one used during the annual budget presentations three additional time a year.

Commissioner Cooper asked if the activity report details how many hours an officer spends responding or investigating a call, or just the number of calls.

Chief Spera stated that the report shows the number of incoming calls.

Commissioner Coppes asked if the system can't pull the information of how long an Officer spends on a call in a monthly format.

Chief Spera stated no the system does not do that.

Commissioner Coppes stated that the report is good but it doesn't give a good sense of what is necessary or what can be cut out.

Chief Spera stated that there are some duties that the Officers perform that he referred to as nice to have such as motor vehicle lockouts and the investigation of private parking lot accidents. He also added that those duties are performed while officers are already working their shifts. He stated that he believes in maximizing employee work.

Commissioner Coppes stated that he would like to see all the nice to have duties put together and for the Police Commission to decide if there is a better way to streamline the budget.

Chief Spera stated that the Officer is dispatched to the motor vehicle lockout but should a higher priority call come in the Officer is removed and sent to the other call.

Commissioner Copper asked if Old Saybrook can compare budgets to other towns around the shoreline.

Chief Spera stated that each town budgets differently. He stated that Clinton's Police budget number is a lot less than Old Saybrook's due to the fact that they do not put any of their building expenses in their regular expenses and supplies budget. Gasoline alone is \$75,000 for Old Saybrook and as of last year did not appear as a true budget number in the police budget.

Commissioner Coppes stated that he did not know that but the things he hears from residents just show the lack of knowledge.

Commissioner Cooper asked Chief to identify the required activities versus the nice to have ones.

Chief Spera stated that motor vehicle lockouts and parking lot accidents are the nice to have.

Commissioner Cooper added Police Officers as First Responders as a nice to have.

Chief Spera stated that First Responders are not a nice to have but they are a true necessity. He reminded that Commission that the Police Department has been designated by the State Department of Public Health to serve the Town of Old Saybrook as the Medical First Responders. This practice has been in place for decades.

Chief Spera spoke about the term transparency that is often used at meetings. He stated that he has never not been transparent. He has hosted workshops. Police Officers have come in to explain daily tasks at public meetings. All he can do is present the facts. He suggested that the Commission members come to the Police Department and participate in a ride along for a shift to get a better understanding of the Police Officers roles he said.

Chief Spera stated that his goal is for each Commissioner to be a champion for the Police Department. He suggested that each new Commissioner make an appointment to come in to the Police Department and get a formal introduction and orientation to the operation. He added that it is difficult to learn everything about policing in three meetings.

Commissioner Maselli stated that he has participated in a ride along and found it very informative.

Chairman Stuart stated that the new Commissioners shouldn't take the learning curve as personal. It's not easy to understand what policing is. He understands it because he lived it. Commissioner Burnham and Maselli have sat on the Commission for years prior and have a good grasp at understanding it. He stated that the Commissioners are elected to serve on this Commission but not trained to.

Chief Spera agreed with Chairman Stuart and stated that next regular meeting the Commission will be briefed on the Freedom of Information rules that govern the Commission.

Chief Spera briefed the Commission on the facility updates and stated that once warranty work is almost complete the Department will start to work on open house plans for this coming spring.

XI. **Comments and/or Concerns from Commissioners**

Commissioner Maselli stated that he would recommend a standing agenda items that details future business of the Commission. There are many topics that the Commission needs to look into such as the evaluation of the Chief of Police and less than lethal force.

Chairman Stuart agreed and stated that items of future business will be added as a standing items to the upcoming agendas.

XII. **Adjournment**

**Commissioner Maselli made the motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Secretary Moran. The motion to adjourn the meeting passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.**

**The meeting adjourned at 9:17 PM.**

*The next regular Police Commission meeting is scheduled for February 22, 2016 at 7:00 PM in the first floor conference room at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.*

Respectfully submitted by:

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Jennifer Damato  
Records Clerk for the Old Saybrook Police Commission