

OLD SAYBROOK POLICE COMMISSION

Special Meeting

January 8, 2016

MINUTES

A special meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Friday, January 8, 2016 at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

Present: Chairman Stuart, Vice Chairman Von Dassel, Secretary Moran and Commissioners Burnham, Maselli, Coppes and Cooper were present. 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

Chairman Stuart called the meeting to order at 5:30PM and led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Comments from the Public

Bridget Frank from Pathway Lighting located at 175-5 Elm Street stated that this past October the company purchased the property across the street from their current building and that Pathway Lighting was interested in putting in a crosswalk in-between their buildings. She also stated that they would like the name of the road to be changed due to the fact that the current name cannot be found in various GPS programs. She handed out paperwork to each Commissioner regarding Pathway Lighting's request.

Chairman Stuart asked Ms. Frank if Pathway Lighting is looking to get a crosswalk put in between the two buildings.

Bridget Frank stated that yes, the company has a lot of employees that go back and forth across the road multiple times a day. Meetings take place in both buildings and it has become a hazard for the employees to cross the road multiple times a day. They would also like to change the name to Research Parkway so people can find the businesses.

A male in the audience stood up and thanked the Commission and the Police Department for the School Resource Officer program. He stated that his son often comes home and tells him stories about how the School Resource Officer helped a child that was left behind and so on. He along with many other parents who couldn't make it to the meeting tonight appreciate the fact that the program is supported.

Teresa Bullman, the Co-President of the Goodwin School PTO, stated that she is also a parent and she wanted to come to tonight's meeting to voice her opinion and concern for the School Resource Program. She stated that it's a great program and that she hopes it continues.

III. Presentation, Discussion, and Possible ACTION pertaining to the Proposed 2016 – 2017 Capital and Operating Budgets

Chief Spera presented the proposed Department of Police Services 2016-2017 Operating and Capital Budget to the Police Commission and to the public via a Power Point Presentation.

During and after the presentation, Commissioners asked several questions.

Commissioner Coppes asked if the First Selectman carries the funds for the Dispatcher raises in his contingency fund.

Chief Spera responded that the First Selectman is currently carrying contingency money for the dispatchers.

While Chief Spera presented a slide regarding arrest statistics Commissioner Cooper asked Chief Spera to define an arrest.

Chief Spera defined a custodial arrest.

Commissioner Coppes asked if statistics can be compared to other communities.

Chief Spera stated yes but the statistics are subjective as NIBERS information contains only arrest data.

Commissioner Coppes asked if one of the arrest statistics slides were based off of internal data.

Chief Spera stated that yes the information is from the Department's Records Management System.

While discussing the Police Officer vacation/replacement line item Commissioner Coppes asked Chief Spera who is being paid as a replacement when a Police Officer is not at work.

Chief Spera stated that a current member of the patrol staff would fill the vacancy in accordance with the rules established by the bargaining unit agreement.

Commissioner Cooper suggested that the Police Department needs to look at filling these vacation/sick shifts with per-diem employees. A per-diem employee would be paid at a straight time rate as opposed to an overtime rate. He stated that the Police Commission needs to figure out ways to reduce costs.

Chief Spera responded that the Police Department has some per-diem Officers but how they are used is regulated by the collective bargaining unit. The contract dictates when work can be outsourced to per-diem Officers.

Commissioner Cooper stated that he read the contract and he was under the impression that the Department is a closed shop and that anyone hired is a union member.

Chief Spera stated that only full time police officers are members of the bargaining unit. Per Diem police officers are not. He added that only Full time dispatchers are part of the dispatch bargaining unit and that per diem dispatchers are not.

Commissioner Coppes asked if a Police Officer qualifies for an overtime rate if they work past the regular 8 hour shift.

Chief Spera stated that Police Officers make different rates based on how many hours they each work in a week long pay period.

Secretary Moran asked if a Police Officer works beyond 40 hours does the Officer receive time and a half.

Chief Spera stated that the Police Officers have to work 40 hours. Those 40 hours can be made up of work, vacation time or holiday time but cannot be made up of sick time.

Commissioner Cooper asked what Chief Spera uses as a week.

Chief Spera responded that the pay week is from Saturday to Friday. How many hours a person works is calculated and from there its determined if pay is at a straight time rate or an overtime rate and what personnel budget category it should be deducted from.

Chief Spera explained how that most Officers have different overtime rates due to longevity and education stipends being included in the calculations.

Commissioner Cooper suggested instead of doing yearly longevity and education stipends to offer a different type of compensation.

Chairman Stuart stated that from his perspective vested retirement is what keeps the more senior Officers interested in their employment but the longevity and education stipends help keep the employees with less tenure interested in maintaining their employment.

Commissioner Cooper stated that retention of the younger staff is important. He asked the Chief of Police how the Police Commission can help reduce the turn over.

Chief Spera stated that Old Saybrook's benefits need to be enhanced. One area that should be addressed are retirement benefits. Currently the police pension is only calculated on an officer's base salary and for many of the staff no retiree health insurance will be offered.

Looking at the sick time replacement chart Commissioner Cooper asked Chief Spera if Police Officers are paid out for their full sick time balance upon retirement.

Chief Spera stated that sick time payout upon retirement is more than half of when an employee is allowed to accumulate with the maximum payout being 81 days.

Commissioner Cooper asked if there was a reserve for those sick time payout dollars. He stated that part of the money was earned at a much lower rate during the early years. For example he said part of that time was earned when the Officer was making less money per hour than what the Officer will be making upon retirement. He stated that it makes no sense to pay the retirement sick time cash out at the current retirement pay rate.

Chief Spera stated that the town sets aside money for retirements. It's an off budget account which is managed by the First Selectman.

Commissioner Coppes asked if those accounts were on a different balance sheet somewhere.

Chief Spera stated yes.

Commissioner Burnham stated that since an Officer is only able to cash out 50% (fifty percent) of their earned sick time upon retirement the town is already saving money.

Commissioner Cooper stated he was confused in different parts of the budget booklet. He asked if an Officer takes a day off is their shift getting backfilled at a time and a half rate. He then asked Chief Spera if an A day (administrative day) can be used to backfill vacation or sick days.

Chief Spera stated that the current contract language prohibits police officers from using Administrative Time to backfill patrol shifts, although he has proposed a contractual amendment to change that. The Chief further stated that the pay rate that an employee backfilling a vacant slot is determined by the number of hours the employee has worked for the week.

Chief Spera stated that in the future he would like the Officers to get more involved in the community and he would like to start up a bike patrol.

Commissioner Cooper asked if the bike patrol would be instead of an Officer in his cruiser or in addition to the Officer in the cruiser.

Chief Spera stated instead of the Officer in his cruiser the Police Officer would be on a bike, that the program would be extremely limited but add a positive proactive patrol during the summer months.

When the slide came up regarding Police Vehicles Commissioner Maselli stated that at one Board of Finance meeting he attended it was suggested to the Chief that at the end of the lease, to keep two vehicles that are on the lower side of miles etc to use for private duty work. Commissioner Maselli asked if anything else was ever said about that.

Chief Spera stated that yes it was suggested to keep two of the vehicles and use them for private duty jobs as long as they are not maintenance nightmares. He loved the idea since on outside jobs the vehicles actually earn the town money but he has not heard anything else regarding it.

Commissioner Cooper asked where the vehicle lease line item was in the budget booklet.

Chief Spera stated that there is no line item as it is a Capital expense so it comes out of the Capital Budget.

Commissioner Cooper asked where computer equipment replacement costs are.

Chief Spera stated that there is a computer capital replacement budget that is not part of the Police Department's budget.

Chief Spera highlighted the budget process and the time lines that each department follows.

Chairman Stuart then asked the Commission which direction they would like to go in. He stated that he spoke with First Selectman Fortuna and stated that the Police Commission might not be able to submit anything by the January 15th deadline. He told First Selectman Fortuna that the Police Commission takes

the process very seriously and Chairman Stuart wants the Commission to feel safe asking questions and making decisions and not be rushed.

Chief Spera stated that the grammatical edits that Commissioner Maselli found will be changed in the forthcoming booklets after the Board of Selectman adopts a budget.

Vice Chairman Von Dassel stated that on page 10 the total number would be 78 and not 72.

Chief Spera thanked the Vice-Chairman and stated that that while an error was found it doesn't change the calculated dollar amount, and therefore no effect on the funds being requested.

Secretary Moran stated that he is concerned about the unknown costs for the new building. He suggested asking the First Selectman to set aside money for the unknown charges. He stated that he was told that the construction company delivered the manuals for all the equipment in 36 Lynde Street.

Chief Spera stated that recently the gas pump went down over the long holiday. No one was on call for three days. These types of situations are concerning to the Chief. He stated that the Police Department did receive some paperwork but the manuals were not complete. Chief Spera stated that he is also worried about the cost for the new building, as he has no actuals to base the budget request on. The First Selectman is aware of the concerns and may adjust the budget when the Board of Selectman deliver their budget to the Board of Finance.

Secretary Moran stated that the town may have to hire people to maintain the building after the drop dead budget date.

Chief Spera agreed stating that the budget that started July 1, 2015 was included a Town facility Manager. As of right now that position has not been filled. At the Selectman's workshop Chairman Stuart and Chief Spera can speak to First Selectman Fortuna about the concerns they have for the maintenance of the new facility.

Secretary Moran asked if the Police Department receives a separate bill from Eversource each month.

Chief Spera stated that yes the Police Department has their own bill and meter. He said that Town Hall is in the process of getting a new accounting system and he suggested that before that system starts the Town needs to decide if each department should still be paying separate bills or one bill for each utility supplier.

Chief Spera stated that he is hopeful that bills will be paid to companies such as Eversource from the Accounting Department in the future and then Town Hall can break out each Department's charges internally to ensure the true costs of each facility is transparent.

Secretary Moran agreed stating that it would be nice to reduce the Police Department's budget and increase the overall efficiency of the town.

Chairman Stuart suggested to use the same numbers as last year for facility expenses. He wants to let the Board of Selectman and Board of Finance know that the Police Commission does not really know what these building and maintenance numbers are going to be and hopefully next year the Commission will have some more concrete numbers to present.

Secretary Moran stated that it should take about two years to get a good estimate.

Commissioner Cooper suggested that the Commission pick up this conversation at one of the meetings scheduled for next week.

Commissioner Burnham questioned what meetings were scheduled for next week, she said she was never contacted about scheduling additional meetings after tonight's Special Meeting.

Secretary Moran stated that he has a copy of the email that was sent out to each Commissioner and he can resend to her. He said that he went ahead and reserved the additional meeting spaces should the Commission need more time to discuss the budget.

Commissioner Cooper suggested adjourning tonight's meeting and scheduling the next one.

Commissioner Maselli asked the Commission what other questions Commissioners had. He asked what level of conversation is needed. He stated that the Commission should continue tonight as everyone is here and there really hasn't been much conversation so far regarding the budget that Chief Spera presented.

Secretary Moran asked about the vehicle list, he wanted to know if the Police Department has a record and date of each odometer in each car.

Chief Spera stated that yes on each shift vehicle mileage is recorded.

Secretary Moran stated that since some vehicles get more miles he would be interested to know how to compensate for that.

Chief Spera stated that Master Sergeant Van Der Horst handles the Police Vehicle Feet and could schedule him to do a presentation at a future meeting to explain the program. All the town is obligated to do is make the lease payment in the amount of \$94,000.00 which is the only capital budget request.

Chairman Stuart asked the Commission to keep on task with what was presented in the budget booklet.

Chief Spera asked if the budget booklet format was easy to understand for the new members of the Commission.

Commissioner Cooper stated that he would have liked to have seen last year's budget numbers and this year's year to date spending in the booklet.

Commissioner Coppes agreed stating that that would be nice to get a feel for the real numbers.

Commissioner Maselli stated that maybe those numbers can be put in the gray bar on top of each line item in the budget booklet.

Chief Spera stated that he would be happy to change the format for next year and added that all the information concerning last year's funding levels, actuals, and requests are located in various parts of the facility.

Commissioner Burnham asked if the Police Commission chooses to adopt the Police vacation day coverage proposed for this year the cost increase moving forward would be small.

Chief Spera stated that yes it would be a very small increase and it could possibly only be the contractual wage increases in the future if the line item was property funded.

Commissioner Burnham stated that this proposed number is much closer to what the Police Department is actually spending.

Chief Spera stated that the proposed number is closer to the correct number but may still be too low since it still doesn't represent funding the full liability. The Chief stated that his goal is to fully fund the Department's fiscal liabilities, based on actuals and items listed in employee contracts.

Secretary Moran stated that Chief Spera doesn't list his year by year budget. There is no list of how much the Department was over or under each year.

Chief Spera stated that the line items where the budget most often goes over is in the personnel budget category. Each and every year a detailed explanation is provided regarding any over or under spending. He also added that the actuals for the past two years are located in a Town Spreadsheet at the end of the budget booklet.

Commissioner Cooper asked if the Police Department has overages every year.

Chief Spera stated not necessarily.

Secretary Moran stated that the Police Department's mean is about \$115,000.00 over.

Chief Spera stated that's due to many liabilities not being fully funded.

Chairman Stuart suggested to Chief Spera to take the increases on a percentage basis and go forward with asking for more than the Police Department has ever had before. If the budget is properly funded there will not be a huge adjustment for next year.

Commissioner Burnham stated that the Board of Finance will not be coming up with any additional funding so it's up to the Police Commission to put the money in the correct line item.

Secretary Moran asked Chief Spera if the budget is fully funded does that mean the Police Department won't overspend.

Chief Spera stated that if the town fully funded everything he doesn't foresee going over budget.

Secretary Moran stated that all people hear is that the Department is over budget but they don't have time to sit and understand why.

Chief Spera stated that the reason for the increase in certain line items is so the Department doesn't run into the red.

Chairman Stuart stated that he feels that the budget Chief Spera presented is pretty realistic.

Commissioner Coppes asked why not ask for the full thing. Why ask for 90% funding in one line item and not fund the entire existing liability.

Commissioner Maselli stated that he is comfortable taking steps towards fully funding the liabilities. He added that if the Department can operate with less than full funding, it's the Commission's responsibility to try.

Commissioner Coppes asked if this budget proposal will cover everything that the Police Department needs to fund.

Chief Spera stated that he feels it will get the Department closer to the amount needed to properly fund the Department.

Chairman Stuart stated that this system of budgeting is better than budgeting too much. He would rather come in with a lower actual budget number than over budget. He asked Chief Spera if vacation time can still be carried over.

Chief Spera stated that he doesn't allow vacation time to be carried over anymore.

Commissioner Burnham stated that while the police vacation day coverage line item has a large increase compared to last year's budget its very close to what has been actually spent over the past couple years.

Chairman Stuart agreed stating that this year's budget is using actual numbers.

Commissioner Cooper stated that the Police Department's three million dollar budget doesn't include benefits and the off budget accounts. He stated that he would like to see the total budget.

Chief Spera stated that the Police Department used to carry that as part of their budget but the Town changed that practice several years ago. He added that once the Town enters into a contract with a health care provider, actual costs per employee will be provided as part of the final budget book.

Commissioner Cooper stated that he would like an idea of the total budget. What the actual debt on the building is, the off budget accounts etc.

Chairman Stuart stated that the Police Commission is only responsible for paying what is in front of them in the budget booklet that concerns the Operating Budget.

Commissioner Maselli agreed stating that the Commission needs to focus on what they are tasked with.

Chairman Stuart stated that what the Commission needs to see is what the Chief presented to them tonight.

Commissioner Coppes stated that the activity part of the presentation that Chief Spera gave the Police Commission was great. He understands the context of what the Police Department does from an outsider standpoint now. He suggested adding the activity data to the booklet moving forward.

Chief Spera stated that he appreciates the suggestion from Commissioner Coppes and he will look into adding it for next year and possibly this year.

Secretary Moran suggested making a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Coppes asked Chairman Stuart what's the next step for the Police Commission.

Chairman Stuart asked if there was a motion to accept the budgets.

Vice Chairman Von Dassel stated that he will make a motion to accept the budget. He feels that the budget is pretty cut and dry and he likes the idea of trying to fund the sick time to make the numbers more realistic.

Vice Chairman Von Dassel made a motion to adopt the 2016-2017 Operating Budget in the amount of \$3,364,382.00.

Commissioner Burnham seconded the motion.

The motion to approve the Department of Police Services 2016-2017 Operating Budget was approved with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.

Chairman Von Dassel made a motion to adopt 2016-2017 Capital Budget in the amount of \$94,000.00.

Commissioner Maselli 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.

Chief Spera thanked the Commission for their time. He stated that it's been a long night but he appreciated the Commission taking the time to look over the budget booklet. He stated that the Police Department will make the grammatical changes and the one number change and send the updated booklets out when they are constructed. He also stated that he possibly might add the data that Commissioner Coppes suggested.

Chairman Stuart asked Secretary Moran to send Bridget Frank from Pathway Lighting an email regarding her requests.

IV. **Comments from the Public**

A member of the public stood up and stated that he agrees with the Commissioners that all costs should be in the budget and that he knows it hasn't been done in the past. He spoke about the cost involved in owning the Police Station. He feels that there is no reason why the town should have this level of a police budget. He stated that Madison isn't much different from Old Saybrook and he doesn't understand why the budgets are so different.

Chairman Stuart thanked him for his comments.

Renee Shippee stood up and shared concerns about the issues with the new facility and how things do not seem to be improving.

Secretary Moran, who serves as the Chairman of the Police Building Committee and Chief Spera commented on her concerns.

Commissioner Maselli stated that the building issues that have been spoken of are not related to this budget season but the Commission did speak about the possibility of having unknown expenses come up in the future.

Renee Shippee stated that someone should be able to tell the Town of Old Saybrook how much it will cost to maintain the HVAC system. The more information the town can gather the better.

Chairman Stuart stated that Chief Spera has asked many times for that information. The way Chairman Stuart sees it the Police Department is owned by the town. That should fall under the responsibility of the First Selectman.

Commissioner Cooper stated that Chief Spera shouldn't be involved in the building process unless it's telling someone that something is broken.

Secretary Moran stated there is a bond that the Town still has over the construction company and that all the issues will be fixed. The contractor has done everything to make up for the subcontractors sub-par work.

V. **Adjournment**

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:41 PM.

The next regular Police Commission meeting is scheduled for January 25, 2016 at 7:00 PM in the first floor conference room at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jennifer Damato
Records Clerk for the Old Saybrook Police Commission