

Wolfeboro Police Commission

Meeting Minutes

May 15, 2014

Members present: Chairman Joe Balboni Jr., Vice-Chairman Bob Copeland and Ron Goodgame.

Staff present: Chief Stu Chase, Sgt. Chris Keaton and Recording Secretary Amelia Capone-Muccio.

Chairman Balboni called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM and introduced the Commissioner's, staff in attendance and noted a quorum was present.

➤ *Pledge of Allegiance*

Chairman Balboni announced a moment of silence in honor of Officer Stephen Arkell.

Consideration of Minutes

- *Public minutes of March 20, 2014*

Commissioner Ron Goodgame moved the Wolfeboro Police Commission to accept the public minutes of March 20, 2014 as submitted. Commissioner Bob Copeland seconded. Members voted and being none opposed, the motion passed.

Activity Reports

Chief Chase reviewed the following activity reports for the month:

Offenses (State Law) by month: He reported 53 offenses for the month, a 23% decrease with 218 offenses year to date.

Arrest status report: He reported 76 arrests year to date, which is 27% less than 2013. He noted the arrest increase by 16% in April.

Personnel Analysis report: The report is a synopsis of each officer's reporting for the month.

Accidents by street name: He reported 4 accidents for March and 8 for April with 38 year to date. He stated these statistics are consistent with previous years.

Prosecutor's report: He reported 37 defendants answering to 45 offenses, with 10 arraignments, 21 pleas, 3 trials, 7 pretrial conferences and 1 probable cause hearing. The Juvenile court had 13 defendants answering 18 offenses and all were pleas.

School Resource Officer (SRO): He reported a high volume of activity at the High School and Middle School with 47 investigations at the High School.

Citation Report: He reported 614 stops for violations and that 96% of those were non-punitive as the goal is to educate. He provided a break down of those stops.

Discussion:

Commissioner Copeland questioned the reference to False Imprisonment.

Sgt. Keaton replied that it can be relating to one kid confining another if it is a juvenile matter.

Chief Chase noted it typically is in reference to confining but not the level of kidnapping.

Chief's Items

Chief Chase reported the following items:

- The department personnel has completed training in the following since the first of the year: 1). Traffic Crash Reconstruction (80 hours); 2). Oleoresin-capsicum (also known as "OC") Instructor training; 3). DWI litigation; 4). General, instructor training; 5). Advanced training in brake testing equipment for crash reconstruction; 6). First line supervisor's school. In June, four officers will attend a two-day class sponsored by the Secret Service.
- A DEA Drug Take back day was held April 26th at the Public Safety Building. Two, thirty gallon containers were filled from Wolfeboro and over 258 pounds were collected in the region.
- The Central Dispatch personnel were recognized on April 18th during 911 Call Taker's Week. The full-time staff consists of Supervisor Mia Lyons and Dispatchers Michelle Fullerton, Arty Garland, Ken Paul and Will Riley. Part-time staff is Michelle Canty, Mark Washburn, Craig Garland and Jim Savage. Wolfeboro Central Dispatch is one of two, municipal, "24-7" dispatch centers in the County. In 2013, 47,626 calls and or inquiries were handled by this division. He noted they are often the unsung heroes in the public safety mission and we are grateful for their service!
- The Department has requested federal reimbursement for bullet proof vests and body armor that was purchased within the past year. They also will be seeking approval for 500 gun locks to be distributed to our customers and will also be looking into funds for the purchase of an automated external defibrillator for the public safety building.
- The Department has learned from the Department of Safety that while our DWI enforcement funds are approved and in place. Other initiatives they had planned for will not be funded such as extra patrols for crosswalk/pedestrian safety and speed enforcement.
- Memorial Day is the unofficial kick-off of summer and as in the past; officers will be conducting compliance checks of those businesses that dispense alcoholic beverages. If you are a licensed purveyor, reinforce the fact that your wait-staff and or store clerks need to check ID's closely as plainclothes officers in unmarked vehicles are working grants funded by the Attorney General's office to enforce those laws pertaining to underage drinking and sale of alcoholic beverages to minors.
- The Department is still awaiting some direction from the Attorney General's office on our proposal to deal with the many surrendered firearms in our possession. He noted they are also in possession of two vehicles that have been abandoned by their owners. The necessary steps have been taken to notify the registered owner(s) to retrieve the cars and on May 19th, we will petition the court to have the vehicles awarded to the Department for disposition according to state statute.
- He stated he met with the Finance Director recently for a quarterly review of the 2014 budgets. The line in the police budget for legal expenses is overextended by nearly 200%. There is \$1,000.00 appropriated and nearly \$3,000.00 encumbered through March. This is the result of

the many hours Town Counsel has spent on “Right to Know (RSA 91-A) Issues including two hearings in the Carroll County Superior Court earlier this year.

- He stated Lt. Rondeau addressed a group of young people at the Kingswood Youth Center on opportunities in public safety and the military for the facility’s “Career Day” program.
- The Department continues its “School to Work” program with Kingswood Regional High School. A senior student with an interest in the criminal justice field is doing weekly “ride-alongs” with patrol officers. She is getting a personal glimpse of what an officer sees and encounters in his or her daily duties.
- The annual Torch Run will occur this Saturday commencing at 9:30AM when representatives of several area law enforcement agencies will meet at Pork Hill Road and Center Street and run to the Public Safety Building in Wolfeboro. A cookout will follow on the grounds of the PD. Many of our staff, volunteer their time in this endeavor. Special Olympics is an international organization that provides training and competition for more than 4.2 million athletes with disabilities.
- The Wolfeboro Police Benevolent Association will begin its annual fund raising initiative in July. The WPBA is an incorporated, charitable organization as directed by the State Attorney General’s office. This year, the WPBA will provide scholarships for two, graduating KRHS, seniors and will award scholarships to two, fourth grade students to attend a two-week summer camp this season. The Association is an entirely local endeavor and we thank our community for its support.
- The caretakers of Birch Hill Estates sent a thank you card for assistance rendered recently and a complimentary letter from Mr. McDermott of Sandwich who thanks Officer Mike Strauch and his father, Dave. Mr. McDermott’s wife and children were broken down on Rt. 16 with a flat tire when the Strauch’s happened along, changed the tire and got the family back on their way.
- He stated Officers Bois and Devine, the seasonal employees, are looking forward to working the Downtown area once again.
- And lastly he stated the cash donations toward the K9 program are now around the \$7,000.00 and the Department is looking into a grant opportunity that may help defray the cost of the purchase and training of a new dog. There may be a donated vehicle in our future that could potentially free-up an administrative vehicle that would easily be converted to a K9 car with minimal costs. The Lieutenant will brief the K9 Committee on these matters at the next scheduled meeting.

Discussion:

Commissioner Goodgame questioned if the extra patrols lack of grant funds impacts the summer officers.

Chief Chase replied it will not.

Board of Selectmen’s Representative

Ms. Silk stated the following:

- As reported about the DEA Drug Take Back program 390 tons of pharmaceuticals were collected in April 2014 which is higher than the two collections done in 2010/2011.
- She stated if the public missed that collection they can dispose of medicines at the House Hold Hazardous Waste Facility’s medicine collections on June 21st and August 16th as those are the only days meds can be collected because a pharmacist and police officer are present.

- She reported she attended the Wild NH event in Concord last month and was fascinated by the demonstration done by a K9 and she provided the examples of the various roles the dog can cover.

Public

Chairman Balboni stated he would open up the meeting to public comments and requested they state their name and limit their comments to 3 minutes per person.

Jane O'Toole of 109 Westwood Drive addressed the Commission and stated she is the author of the letter of complaint against Commissioner Copeland regarding his comments made in a public restaurant. She explained she understands Mr. Copeland's 1st amendment rights, but noted the offensive language of "F-ing N*ger" which is inexcusable language by a public official and reflects poorly on the town. She feels that Mr. Copeland can not serve without prejudice and should step down. She questioned if Chairman Balboni's comment that Mr. Copeland's response was accepted by the commission, was to mean "accepted" as in okay or "accepted" as in received.

Commissioner Goodgame replied that neither he nor Chairman Balboni share Commissioner Copeland's views or condone what he said. He stated what was meant by being "accepted" was the response was "received".

Edward G. Rice, 37 Harbor Way, Interim Pastor of All Saint's Episcopal Church addressed the Commission to express his displeasure with the statements as his father died due to experiments done under the reign of Hitler and that he takes offense to such hate language. He feels as a Police Commissioner it is their roll to provide public safety.

John R. White of 125 Pine Hill Road stated the comments are appalling coming from a public official and that every citizen should be treated with respect especially from a public official. He stated what message is this comment sending to the people of Wolfeboro from the Police Department or those who might want to join it? He stated he was elected to represent everyone not just those who are white. He feels this conduct disqualifies Commissioner Copeland and he should resign to avoid instituting a recall.

Michael Bloomer of 15 Old Lakeview Terrace a junior at Kingswood Regional High School stated that Commissioner Copeland's comments about President Obama are despicable and that his comments are the criteria for hate speech. He felt that he should resign his position.

Sandy MacBeth of 9 Treadwell Lane noted she was wearing 3 resign signs and that this is a small town and has no need for a Police Commission.

Catherine Bloomer of 15 Old Lakeview Terrace stated she is thrilled with the turnout of people to the meeting tonight as she started the Facebook page for the event. She advised Commissioner Copeland to look around the room and that it is obvious the public does not feel he is doing what they want. She hopes he will do the right thing and resign and not cost the town money to institute a recall.

Francis Xavier Bader stated he does not feel Commissioner Copeland should resign for using one word and referred to the I hate white people statement made by King Chavez. He expressed his displeasure with the President in democratic NH.

Richard Stockton of Gov. Wentworth Highway stated that he feels Commissioner Copeland is protected by his 1st amendment rights and that he takes offense to gay marriage.

Daniel Anthony Lang of Portsmouth and student at Brewster Academy stated he feels they should respect all members of society.

Jim Roulade of 4 Olson Way stated he is sorry to hear those defending Commissioner Copeland as his statements are reprehensible.

Beverly Woods of 401 Haines Hill Road noted the word prejudice means “pre-judge” and prejudging has no place in the Police Department or on the Police Commission.

John Struble teacher at Kingswood Regional High School and stated he is an openly gay teacher and stated he is glad Commissioner Copeland said what he said because he stated he has many black friends who live in the south and would rather live in the south because they know where they stand. He stated that if he made this statement he would not expect to keep his job as public officials do not have a right to prejudice. He asked Commissioner Copeland his criteria is?

Commissioner Copeland replied he will not answer that.

Robert Hogan of 252 McManus Road stated Wolfeboro is a community who depends on tourism and being a hospitable community and these comments are damaging to the business community and the people in it. He feels it will take decades to recover from this and that Commissioner Copeland needs to do what is best for Wolfeboro and resign. He noted a point of order for the Chairman that several other people could not attend the meeting today due to the time and requested the another meeting be held to accommodate those who work 9-5.

Ethan Hipple Director of Parks & Recreation for Wolfeboro stated he is representing his staff and the people who use the programs and that Wolfeboro welcomes everyone and wants that clear for the record. He stated it is a sad day when these comments are made by an elected official but it's a good day when the community stands up to it.

Roger Murray of 111 Brackett Road stated that they need to focus on the issue at hand, that it is not about Commissioner Copeland's 1st amendment rights, but the comments were made by an elected official who serves the community. He feels this hurts the Police Commission and reflects on the Town of Wolfeboro.

Delina Bickford of 22 Percy Drive she stated she chose to move here after serving in the US Navy she moved to Wolfeboro to raise a family and feels everyone is treated equal. She feels these statements roll downhill to the Police Department and affects everyone.

David Baker of 53 Elm Street stated he has known Commissioner Copeland sees him every week and has never heard him say anything prejudice against citizens. He wished there was a turnout like this for US Senator Burt for his resignation.

Brian Bloomer of 15 Old Lakeview Terrace asked for Commissioner Copeland's resignation tonight on behalf of the people.

Tim Carabella of 15 Eagle Trace noted that LA Clippers owner was banned from the NBA and that is a private entity and this is a public official, there is no room for this kind of language.

Paul Green of 7 Sandstrome Road stated he has the upmost respect for the Police Department and is concerned that these comments make it unclear if the Police Department is racist.

Judith Apy of 245 North Main Street stated regardless of your political affiliation you don't disrespect the office of the President and asked Commissioner Copeland to please resign.

Jamie Myers of 21 Fryer Tuck Way and teacher at Kingswood Regional High School noted he is proud of his student Michael Bloomer and as a teacher they teach the value of tolerance and supports the requests for Commissioner Copeland to resign.

Charles Shields of Alton stated he grew up in Massachusetts and around some tough guys and never heard such comments.

Dennis Davey of Beach Pond Road in Wolfeboro stated he did 40 years in law enforcement and is the parent of 3 great children two of whom adopted 3 Hessian Children who are equal to all his grandchildren. He referred to comments of Commissioner Copeland about not being "phobic" and feels he has demonstrated he is phobic and a racist and that both words used are a lethal combination. He stated if such language was used by him when he was employed he would expect to be fired and he out to resign.

Shelly Eastman Lang stated she is raising her young children and is teaching them to respect everyone and that he should be held accountable for his comments.

Rob Houseman of 19 Pleasant Street stated as a parent of children at Brewster Academy which has a racial diverse student body and feels the comments affect the community and Commissioner Copeland should resign.

Chairman Balboni thanked the Community for their comments and closed the public comment portion of the meeting. Being no further business before the Commission, Chairman Balboni entertained a motion to enter non-public session at 5:14 PM.

After a brief recess to allow the public to clear out for nonpublic session, the Commission moved to non-public session to discuss collective bargaining, litigation, personnel and matters of internal emergency practices of the Police Department.

The Commission re-entered public session at 6:10 PM.

Chairman Balboni announced that the Commission sealed non-public session minutes of the May 15, 2014, by a 2/3rd vote as required by law. He announced the topics discussed in non-public session were collective bargaining, litigation, internal emergency practices of the police department and personnel.

Ed Comeau questioned the process of nonpublic session.

A member of the public questioned what part of the public meeting was discussed in nonpublic session.

Chairman Balboni replied that Commissioner Copeland's comments were not discussed in non-public session.

A member of the public questioned if they will schedule a meeting.

Chairman Balboni replied he will let them know when he does.

A member of the public stated she missed the meeting early but saw the information about the issue on Facebook and applauds Ms. O'Toole for bringing it to light. She feels this is verbal violence and the use of the "N" word is racial and seeing that Commissioner oversees the Police Department he should resign.

Richard Coan of 3 Camp School Road stated he has known Commissioner Copeland for 10 years and is one of his closet friends. He stated he is a good man, comes from a good family and good father to his children. He is a supporter in the community and sponsors many functions in the town. He feels that his private conversation was taken out of context. He stated he is not afraid to stand up for this man.

Nick Spenetto of WMUR Channel 9 questioned if they want to make a comment to provide comfort to the community until a decision has been made.

Chairman Balboni replied that they will meet to discuss the issue both non-public and then publically.

Robert Hogan stated this issue has made it all the way to San Francisco news.

Michelle Rafalowski-Houseman stated the adults in the community need to be positive role models and racists and bigot comments have no place in a town position. She feels unsafe because of these comments.

Christie Bowers of Wyanoke Gate Lane stated that Commission Copeland maybe a wonderful BBQ guest, but is does change the racial slur used. She feels the public has lost trust in him and is unable to provide an unbiased opinion. He should consider resigning.

Being no further business before the Commission, Chairman Balboni entertained a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Ron Goodgame moved the Wolfeboro Police Commission to adjourn at 6:30 PM. Commissioner Joe Balboni Jr. seconded. Being none opposed, the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Amelia Capone-Muccio
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