

**STONINGTON BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING  
Thursday, June 10, 2021 at 5:00 P.M.  
STONINGTON POLICE HEADQUARTERS  
173 SOUTH BROAD STREET  
PAWCATUCK, CT 06379**

**MEETING MINUTES**

Present: Chairman Robert O'Shaughnessy & Vice Chairman Bob Tabor  
Commissioners Robert Elmer, Bill Turner & Lisa Tepper Bates  
Chief Darren Stewart & Captain Todd Olson

**1. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman O'Shaughnessy called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy extended congratulations to Chief Stewart for serving as President of the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association for the past year.

**2. Citation for William Sydenham 100 Club**

Chief Stewart introduced retired Lieutenant William Sydenham, CT State Police. He stated Lt. Sydenham has been the Executive Director of the Hundred Club for twenty-seven years. The Hundred Club provides assistance to the families of fallen corrections officers, police officers and fire fighters. About \$12 million has been given to families of fallen officers over the last fifty years. Representative Howard recognized Lt Sydenham's years of service and presented Lt. Sydenham with a citation on behalf of Senator Somers, himself and the General Assembly.

Commissioner Turner reiterated the value of the Hundred Club and shared his personal experience with the Hundred Club and how they stepped in to take the place of his father, who was a Fire Captain in New Haven who passed away in the line of duty, and how much his mother and his family appreciates the Hundred Club.

Lt. Sydenham shared a story with the Police Commission that when he was hired by the committee, his first assignment was to assist a fire fighter's family that had put an addition on their house about a year before the fire fighter's death. The wife was having problems with the addition separating from the main house. Lt. Sydenham did some research and went before the Board of Directors with his findings. He was told to fix the problem, no matter the cost, for the wife of the fallen firefighter.

Lt. Sydenham further remarked that the Hundred Club has been providing \$25,000 per year scholarships and they just increased the amount to \$40,000 per year.

**3. Remarks of the Public**

None.

#### **4. New Business**

Vice Chairman Tabor made a motion to change the September meeting date for the Board of Police Commissioners from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, 2021. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

#### **5. Old Business**

##### **a. E-Mail Re: Mystic Half Marathon – Event Adjustment \*VOTE NEEDED\***

Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that this event has already been before the Board of Police Commissioners and that they are just requesting a time change from 7am to 8am for the start time for this year's 10K. The route has not changed; however, they are eliminating the half marathon component.

Commissioner Turner made a motion to approved the requested changes to the Mystic 10K. Motion seconded by Vice Chairman Tabor. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

##### **b. Art Festival – Bay Street Follow-Up \*POSSIBLE VOTE\***

Bruce Flax, Greater Mystic Chamber

Amanda Arling, Greater Mystic Chamber

Chairman O'Shaughnessy stated that this event was discussed and approved at the May meeting with the condition that the concerns of the Bay Street residents be addressed.

Mr. Flax gave a brief overview of what was discussed at the last meeting. He noted that there was an opportunity to make changes to the event in regard to removing booths from Route 1 and extending the Festival down Bay Street and into the Mystic Seaport. The Police Departments, Fire Departments and Ledge Light are all supportive of the event as presented. Mr. Flax stated that they went door to door to all the Bay Street residents and received mixed reviews on the proposed route. At the last Police Commission meeting, they were given a letter from the Bay Street residents with a list of requests including no booths on Bay Street, two uniformed officers, trash barrels, no food vendors, and arranging for access for residents. Mr. Flax stressed the need for some booths on Bay Street to continue the flow and he also asked the Police Department's recommendation on officers. Mr. Flax further explained the proposal to break Bay Street into quarters with two 10x10 booths in the first quadrant, an art installation made by middle school students in the second quadrant, a 10x10 tent from Antonino with a BMW on display in the third quadrant and the fourth quadrant would have two 10x10 booths for a non-profit.

Mr. Flax admitted that the meeting with the Bay Street residents after the last Police Commission meeting did not go well and that they did not come to an agreement with the neighbors. Ms. Arling noted that changing the route has always been an obstacle and that in order to remove the booths from Route 1 they need to extend into the Mystic Seaport. This is the only safe and viable route and it can only be achieved if there is a cohesive event. According to Ms. Arling, they have agreed to no food or beverage booths on Bay Street and they will be installing and maintaining trash cans. She reiterated that this is a very family friendly event and noted that having the Mystic Seaport involved opens up more parking. She also stated that local businesses and Churches rely on the Art Festival.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy commented that by statute, the amount of law enforcement needed at an event is determined by the Chief of Police. Vice Chairman Tabor asked if the Mystic Chamber will ensure access and egress to all Bay Street residents to which Ms. Arling stated that they would have police escorts which is also done for residents on other streets impacted by the Art Festival. Vice Chairman

Tabor asked of Chief Stewart if rerouting the Art Festival is an improvement to pedestrian safety to which Chief Stewart stated that it is definitely an improvement. Chief Stewart further commented that years ago, Groton reached out to State DOT about shutting down Route 1 but that idea was rejected by the State.

Commissioner Elmer asked if any contingencies have been made in regard to pedestrians not having access to the docks to which Ms. Arling noted that there will be volunteers and signage to deter people from the private docks.

Commissioner Turner stated that he wants to be assured that the luxury properties on Bay Street are not abused and that the use of the street is only to blend the Seaport component to the installations on Holmes Street and Cottrell Street. He stated that it is incumbent on the Mystic Chamber and the Art Festival to address the concerns raised by the Bay Street residents. Ms. Arling reiterated that she fears that without booths or anything on Bay Street people will not continue through the entire show and it will be a disservice to the artists.

Commissioner Bates thanked Mr. Flax and Ms. Arling for their follow up and she stressed that she hopes all residents of Mystic, regardless of the type of property they are in, enjoy the respect and fair treatment of the Police Commission and the police. The issue is the respect for the residents and the Mystic Chamber has gone out of their way to show respect and be flexible. She further noted that the pandemic is largely over but the economic impact is still ongoing and we need to support our local businesses and artists that make their livelihood at this event. Commissioner Bates appreciates the efforts the Mystic Chamber has taken to have discussions with these residents and others.

**Dave Ryan, 8 Bay Street, Mystic, CT**

Mr. Ryan acknowledged the efforts of the Mystic Chamber; however, he thinks they need to revisit the number of parking spaces that will be available in the Mystic Seaport lot. Mr. Ryan was informed that there will be about five hundred parking spaces but he feels there are more like three hundred fifty spaces since some are being taken up by the Seaport's materials. He also expressed his concerns with the eighty thousand people that are estimated to attend the event.

**Rod Desmarais, 2 Bay Street, Mystic, CT**

Mr. Desmarais expressed his concerns with the event and he does not want booths on Bay Street. He stated that the police do a great job with handling events, however, he stressed his concerns with the expected attendance of eighty thousand people being funneled down Bay Street which is a residential street. He further discussed the implications of such a large number of attendees. Before there were two police departments involved, this proposed plan places the entire event in the Town of Stonington, and he wants to be assured that the police department can handle double the load and twice the usual length of the Art Festival.

Mr. Desmarais noted that the Art Festival is held during an already busy time and it may be beneficial to hold it in the fall or at the end of spring and not in the middle of summer. He asked the Police Commissioners if their neighbors would be happy if they approved an event of this magnitude on their street. Mr. Desmarais feels the event has gotten too big and he does not feel that the event organizers have done enough research. Mr. Desmarais begged the Police Commission to give this more thought and he presented them with a letter noting these concerns. He stated that there are other alternatives to the proposed event.

**Matthew Beaudoin, 18 Johnson St., Pawcatuck, CT & Mystic Knotwork, 25 Cottrell St., Mystic, CT**  
Mr. Beaudoin stated that the new layout and design of the Art Festival is favorable to safety. He was under the impression that the Art Festival was dangerous and congested so he never went to the show. Mr. Beaudoin stated that it is excellent that the Art Festival has been moved off of Route 1. He noted that unfortunately the residents will see an increase in foot traffic, however, he feels the perceived safety outweighs the concerns.

Chief Stewart has been attending the Art Festival, either working it or visiting it, for the last thirty-six years. He noted that the biggest growth has not been with the Art Festival but with people taking advantage of the event being in town. There can be around fifty-five hundred people at the event at any given time. Chief Stewart noted that Bay Street will be no parking and he suggests that the Mystic Chamber give the residents a contact number to facilitate escorts. He stated that there are no guarantees that there will be no issues but they will deal with any issues that arise. This can be a trial for this year's event and revisit it before next year to see if it is working or if there needs to be changes. Chief Stewart noted that they can only plan to make the event as safe as possible.

Mr. Desmarais further commented that this is not an event that is favorable for businesses and he also does not feel that it belongs on Bay Street. It should not require going into residential neighborhoods.

Chief Stewart commented that he feels the Mystic Chamber has done their homework. Chairman O'Shaughnessy commented that he understands the resident's concerns and will take those into consideration.

Vice Chairman Tabor made a motion to accept the proposal of the Mystic Chamber to utilize Bay Street for the Art Festival on August 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> as set forth tonight by the Mystic Chamber. Law enforcement requirements for the Art Festival should be determined by Chief Stewart as set forth in the General Statutes, and, that in future years, the Mystic Chamber will have to come back to the Police Commission to review how this event went this year. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer. Discussion: Vice Chairman Tabor commented that he respects the residents and that he has personally spoken to some of the Bay Street residents and is cognizant of their comments as to the introduction of this new activity on Bay Street. He has thought long and hard and thinks it should be considered this first year and that it can be managed well but, if that does not happen, this Commission can revisit it. He is not sure over the last few years if the Art Festival has been expanding. His impression is that it has been declining, but it is an important event for the town and an effort should be made to maintain it. This set up works with residents Holmes Street. Commissioner Elmer stated that he is confident that the Mystic Chamber has heard the resident's concerns and will approach this with that in mind, understanding the responsibility they have to the residents. No further discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

## **6. Traffic**

### **a. Speed Display Sign Program Agreement**

The Department will be receiving two new speed display signs and they will be programmed by Captain Olson.

### **b. Mystic Parking Study Discussion**

Chairman O'Shaughnessy shared a copy of the traffic study with all the Police Commissioners to review in case anyone asks them questions about the study. The Town needs to now evaluate and decide what they will do. This is still a work in progress. Chief Stewart noted that this has a lot to do with the economic development and that they are doing the best that they can to manage the parking.

Commissioner Bates asked Chief Stewart if he has been a part of the parking study from the beginning to which he stated that he has and that Chairman O'Shaughnessy has been to all the meetings along with Chief Fusaro from Groton Town. Parking tickets and parking times were discussed briefly. This is still at the beginning stages. There are a variety of issues downtown and there needs to be a group effort in order to benefit the community. This is a problem that a lot of communities would love to have. Chief Stewart thanked the Police Commission for taking a proactive approach.

**7. Approval of Minutes from Thursday, May 13, 2021 Regular Meeting \*VOTE NEEDED\***

Commissioner Elmer noted a minor correction to the minutes stating that he was present however his name was omitted from the list of members present.

Commissioner Elmer made a motion to approve the minutes for the Thursday, May 13, 2021 Regular Meeting as corrected. Motion seconded by Commissioner Tabor. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

**8. Report of the Chief of Police**

**a. Budget Report**

According to Chief Stewart, we are 90% through the fiscal year and have used 79.7% of the budget so we are about 10% under budget. Overall, the budget is in the black.

**b. Monthly Report**

The number of calls are typical for this time of year. Motor vehicle complaints and speeder complaints are increasing.

**c. Alarm Report**

**d. Special Events Schedule**

**e. POST Letter Re: Officer Brito Certificate of Comparative Certification**

This is an FYI for the Police Commission. Officer Brito will be out on FTO for three to six weeks then he will be on his own.

**f. Wireless Design Group Invoice**

Chief Stewart explained that there will be a line-item transfer and he has corrected an error. He further noted that this invoice was \$15,000 over budget. They will have continued discussion with Richard LaSaracina.

**g. Hiring Update**

Three officers have started at the Academy. According to Chief Stewart, they have been commuting to the Academy, however, he thinks they will be able to stay at the Academy soon.

An officer is due to retire in July, so the hiring process will begin again in order to fill that vacancy.

**h. Update from Consultant on Radios**

Mr. Richard LaSaracina was not in attendance.

**i. Hiring of Dispatcher with Grant Money \*VOTE NEEDED\***

Chief Stewart noted that he met with First Selectwoman Chesebrough and that there is federal funding available. First Selectwoman Chesebrough spent some time in dispatch and noted the need for two dispatchers per shift. They anticipate one to two dispatcher retirements coming up. Chief Stewart recommends sending this to the Board of Selectmen to get this funding. Commissioner Turner asked Selectwoman Strunk how the money would come in for this position to which Selectwoman Strunk explained how the funding went to the State then to the municipalities. Commissioner Bates stated that this could also be an opportunity for the fire departments to use funding to upgrade their radio systems.

Commissioner Turner made a motion to authorize Chief Stewart to hire a full-time dispatcher. Motion seconded by Vice Chairman Tabor. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

**j. Support of Water Loop Letter**

FYI.

**k. Letter Re: School Violence Prevention Program Grant Application**

FYI.

**\*\***

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commission that Officer George Stamatien was moved to Detectives now that Matthew Capalbo was promoted to Sergeant.

MADD, the Stonington High School, Pawcatuck Fire Department and Officer Browning organized the car wreck display that was set up in front of the High School. It is a very effective display.

Chief Stewart commented on the 211 event that was held in front of Town Hall. They discussed 911 versus 211 and when to call which number. There will be flyers going out with tax bills, pack back flyers and billboards to spread the news and help bridge the disconnect. There was some discussion about there being a lot of opportunity in Stonington with regard to 211. Vice Chairman Tabor stated that he is very supportive of the concept and asked if the Police Commission will get periodic updates to get an idea of the success rate. Commissioner Bates explained that, since there is a low call volume to 211 from Stonington, it should be fairly easy to track. There was some further discussion in regard to the 211 program.

Vice Chairman Tabor made a motion to accept the Report of the Chief of Police. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

**9. Consent Agenda**

- a. Letter Re: Quiet Zone Affirmation**
- b. Memos Re: Planning & Zoning Applications**
- c. Notice for Bicycle Safety Clinic**
- d. Application for Use of Town Property: 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade**
- e. E-Mail Re: 69<sup>th</sup> Annual Village Fair**

Commissioner Turner made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda. Motion seconded by Commissioner Bates. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

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Chief Stewart commented that thank you notes continue to come in and there should be further conversation about how to memorialize them. There is the idea to put letters and thank yous in a spot that is accessible to the public.

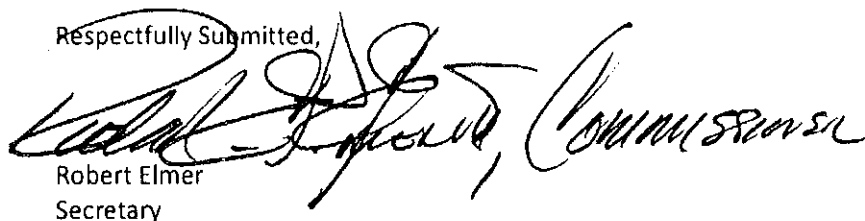
It was clarified that the Board of Police Commissioners will be involved in any final decisions in regard to the Mystic parking study.

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commissioners that the High School will be holding the Senior Pancake Breakfast on Thursday, June 17<sup>th</sup> if any of the Commissioners would like to volunteer.

#### 10. Adjourn

At 6:49 p.m., Commissioner Elmer made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice Chairman Tabor, all in favor, motion approved. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Elmer', is written over the printed name and title. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'R' and 'E'.

Robert Elmer  
Secretary