

**STONINGTON BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, January 13, 2022 at 5:00 P.M.
STONINGTON POLICE HEADQUARTERS
173 SOUTH BROAD STREET
PAWCATUCK, CT 06379**

MEETING MINUTES

Present: Chairman Robert O'Shaughnessy & Vice Chairman Robert Elmer
Commissioners Bill Turner, Lisa Tepper Bates, & Patricia Coan
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 thanked the members of the Stonington Police Department, the Captain, both Lieutenant Schneider and Lieutenant Peckham and the Honor Guard under Sergeant Beebe, for their support at Captain Desmond's wake and funeral service.

Chief Stewart also thanked the Department. He then read a letter from Congressmen Courtney, Congressional Record Proceedings and Debates of the 117th Congress, Second Session, House of Representatives, Honoring the Life and Service of Jerry Desmond (see Appendix A).

According to Chief Stewart, the Board of Education will be taking up a letter requesting the naming of the laneway onto the football field as Jerry Desmond Lane.

2. Remarks of the Public

June Strunk, Resident, Town of Stonington

Ms. Strunk voiced her support of Lieutenant Schneider for the position of Chief of the Stonington Police Department. She stated that he is a very modest and humble man who does not self-promote but he is part of the leadership that we have come to trust. When you think of the divisiveness that towns across the country have between the community and the police force, Ms. Strunk stated that we support our police force because of the trust that is there. Ms. Strunk noted that when she was on the Board of Finance, any request submitted by the Police Department, after the Board of Finance did their due diligence about making sure they were getting the best price, there was never a question as to whether or not it was needed because of their trust of the leadership of the Police Department. Ms. Strunk stated that, personally, she has never seen such an outpouring of the community in support of someone. She knows the Police Commission has to do their due diligence with other candidates, however, she only asks the Police Commission to think of the support that Lieutenant Schneider has as our next police Chief.

Robert Emery, Resident, Old Mystic

Mr. Emery has lived at his address in Old Mystic since 1993 and he retired after twenty-eight years with the Groton Town Police Department. During this time, Mr. Emery believes he went through five Chiefs

and an acting Chief. He noted that some were better than others. Mr. Emery further noted that he was the president of the union, and he stated that to see the turnout of officers at this meeting in support of Lieutenant Schneider is pretty amazing to have everyone on the same page. Mr. Emery commented that the Police Commission has a very important decision to make in naming the next Chief. The Chief and the Administration help determine the culture of the agency. If there is not a good culture the Department will not be successful and it will only hurt the town. He suggests to not make a decision based on who may or may not apply. Mr. Emery stated that he has known Lieutenant Bryan Schneider for most of his life and that he worked for his father who was difficult at times, but he was a good and honorable man and Bryan is the same. Mr. Emery stated that sometimes it is best to go with what you know you have and he feels it would be a good decision to name Lieutenant Schneider as Chief.

3. Correspondence

a. Stonington Police Department Union & Non-Union Personnel New Chief Endorsement Letter

Chairman O'Shaughnessy acknowledged that the Police Commission received a very strong letter from the Stonington Police Department union and non-union personnel endorsement for Lieutenant Bryan Schneider as Chief. This letter will be made part of the file and these minutes (see Appendix B).

b. Westerly Police Department Union Letter Re: Appointment of New Chief

Chairman O'Shaughnessy stated that the Police Commission received correspondence from the Westerly Police Department's Union in support of Lieutenant Schneider and it will be made part of the file and these minutes (see Appendix C).

Chairman O'Shaughnessy stated that the Police Commission received correspondence from the Hoxie Fire Department in support of Lieutenant Schneider and it will be made part of the file (see Appendix D).

4. New Business

a. Mystic Irish Parade *VOTE NEEDED*

Matt Forde, MIPF Parade Director

According to Mr. Forde, he has submitted the application to hold the Mystic Irish Parade on Sunday, March 27th. He will be working with Chief Stewart and Chief Fusaro. The route will be the same as in the past. It was noted that if it is a nice day there will be a large crowd. Mr. Forde stated that they are still working on a headliner. This will be Mr. Forde's last year as Parade Director.

Chief Stewart stated that this is a great event and they work well with the police departments.

Commissioner Bates made a motion to approve the Mystic Irish Parade to be held Sunday, March 27, 2022, subject to the requirements the Administration may deem necessary, and upon proof of proper insurance. Motion seconded by Commissioner Turner. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

b. Planning & Zoning Site Plan Application: Seacoast Mushrooms, LLC *COMMENTS NEEDED*

Sergio Cherenzia, Cherenzia & Associated, LTD., on behalf of Seacoast Mushrooms owner Chris Pacheco

Mr. Cherenzia stated that Mr. Pacheco is outgrowing his facility on Farmholme Rd and is looking to build an 8,000 sq ft barn on the property on Taugwonk Rd. This property has had a history of being farmed for over 100 years and is currently zoned as light industrial and Planning & Zoning has approved agriculture in the light industrial zone. Mr. Cherenzia gave a brief overview of the mushroom farming process and noted that it is a green operation. Mr. Pacheco sells his mushrooms locally.

The barn will be set back off the road and will not be seen from the road. The septic will be rated for up to twelve employees. Box trucks will go in and out delivering materials and then delivering product. Chairman O'Shaughnessy asked about the daily truck traffic to which Mr. Cherenzia stated that it would be around once a day. There will be no retail sales at this location. Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted the limited site line to which Mr. Cherenzia stated that there is 250 ft of site line. This site will replace the Farmholme Rd site. Commissioner Bates commented that it is great to see this expansion.

Vice Chairman Elmer made a motion to pass along the following comments to Planning and Zoning; that the Police Commission sees no issues with traffic or safety with this application based on this presentation. Motion seconded by Commissioner Turner. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

5. Old Business

a. 2022 Mystic Half Marathon & 10K *VOTE NEEDED*

Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that this item has come before the Board previously and they were planning on making changes to the route and have decided not to at this time. This will be the same route previously used and they will not be going through the Mystic Seaport or onto Bay Street. They will require the same number of officers as in the past and the race is run very well.

Vice Chairman Elmer made a motion to approve the Mystic Half Marathon to be held Sunday, May 15, 2022, as presented, subject to the requirements the Administration may deem necessary, and upon proof of proper insurance. Motion seconded by Commissioner Turner. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

6. Traffic

Note: Next month the Board will be revisiting the handicap sign (North Water St., McGrath Ct.).

7. Approval of Minutes from Thursday, December 9, 2021 Regular Meeting *VOTE NEEDED*

Commissioner Turner made a motion to approve the minutes for the Thursday, December 9, 2021 Regular Meeting as submitted. Motion seconded by Commissioner Bates. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

8. Report of the Chief of Police

a. Budget Report

According to Chief Stewart, we are 48.1% through the fiscal year and have used 48% of the budget. He did mention the issues with the Overtime budget as there have been numerous employees out due to Covid and the commute of the three new hires to the Academy.

b. Monthly Report

Medical assists have increased, the number of pistol permits issued has come down, the number of motor vehicle accidents has gone up and the criminal activity has remained steady according to Chief Stewart.

c. Yearly Statistics Report

The yearly statistics were included with the Police Commissioner's packets.

d. Alarm Report

e. Special Events Schedule

Chief Stewart noted that the special events are starting to pick up.

Chief Stewart stated that there will be a swearing-in ceremony for the new hire Dylan Foley on Tuesday, January 18th at 9 a.m. The three recruits have graduated from the Academy. Officer Miller and Officer Brito are out on their own.

Chief Stewart noted that there was an incident at one of the local convenient stores where a stabbing occurred. The subject was arrested and Chief Stewart stated the officers involved did a great job.

Commissioner Turner made a motion to accept the Report of the Chief of Police. Motion seconded by Commissioner Coan. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

9. Consent Agenda

a. Letter & Permits for Pedestrian Safety Signs

b. Letter Re: Thank You – Formosa Yacht Club

According to Chief Stewart, this was a thank you for the Formosa Yacht Club's donation at the Stuff-A-Cruiser event. He sent a video on the event's impact on the community to the Police Commissioners. Chief Stewart hopes this event continues long after his retirement.

c. Letters Re: Thank You – Threat to Schools

d. POSTC Letters & Trainee Performance Reports

e. Letters Re: Donations to Animal Control Facility

f. E-Mails Re: Car Theft & Drug Trafficker Federal Sentencing

g. Letters & Memo Re: Funeral for Retired Captain Jerry Desmond

Vice Chairman Elmer made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion seconded by Commissioner Turner. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

10. Adjourn

At 5:33 p.m., Commissioner Turner made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Coan, all in favor, motion approved. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Bill Turner
Secretary

APPENDIX A



Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

House of Representatives

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF JERRY DESMOND

HON. JOSEPH D. COURTNEY
OF CONNECTICUT
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
January 10, 2022

Madam Speaker, I rise today to mourn the passing of dedicated public servant, Captain Jerry Desmond, of Stonington, Connecticut. Mr. Desmond tragically passed at the all too young age of 63 on Friday, December 24, 2021 after a courageous battle with cancer.

Born in 1958 to James and Phillis Desmond in Weymouth, Massachusetts, Jerry attributed his strong work ethic to the model of his parents. From an early age, Jerry was instilled with the value of giving whatever task or challenge laid before him a full “100 percent.” This principle guided him through life to the very end, even during his arduous battle with cancer which he did so with an infectious sense optimism and the can-do attitude that defined his life.

At the age of 5, Jerry and his family moved to Stonington, putting him on a destined path to become an integral part of the local community. The Stonington Public Schools had such an immense impact on him that upon graduating he went on to serve as a substitute teacher and tutor beginning in 1976. This role existed as a further point of inspiration for Jerry, who attended Southern Connecticut State University and earned a Bachelor of Arts of Education.

Though upon graduating he was unable to immediately bridge to a career in teaching, Jerry remained undeterred in his ultimate mission to give back to the community that helped raise him. As someone who was able to appreciate the larger picture, Jerry used the athletic prowess he formed in high school and joined the local police force while simultaneously taking up the role of assistant coach for Stonington High School’s football and track and field teams. In addition to football and track and field, Jerry coached the local woman’s gymnastics team through to his final moments. A fierce optimist who believed in the value of hard work, Jerry was a perfect fit for the Stonington Public School’s athletic programs. He appreciated working with the town’s youth – passing onto them the same values taught by Jerry’s parents before him – and viewed

that work as one of the most rewarding parts of his career – especially enjoying his time as Stonington Police Department's Youth Officer.

Jerry would eventually return back to school and advance his background in education, graduating from the FBI Training Academy in Quantico. He also received a Masters in Homeland Security Leadership from the University of Connecticut. Armed with a revitalized education, Jerry went on to teach as an adjunct professor at the nearby Mitchell College, in New London, Connecticut.

Of course, the pinnacle of Jerry's career was his remarkable 35-years of service to the Stonington Police Department, 17 of those years as Captain of the Department. During that time, he helped oversee the department's marine unit and was involved with the dive team and acted as a boating instructor. He was instrumental in the awarding of a \$375,000 federal grant to the Department for a new police boat which went into service in 2014. That same year, Jerry retired from the department. Not content to accept a sedentary retirement, however, Jerry used his spare time to begin a new career with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection as its Boating Safety and Education Representative, maintaining the role of teacher to the very end.

Madam Speaker, it is an incredible honor to represent constituents as loyal to the future of their community as Jerry. I had the privilege to interact with him as congressman and can attest to his diligent professionalism and down to earth personality which was so engaging. Jerry's life was defined by his love for teaching and giving to his community. His actions touched thousands of people, and he served as an excellent role model for Stonington's next generation. Though the gap left by his generous and caring nature could not hope to be filled in the Stonington community, we can find relief in the reality that those whose lives were enriched by Jerry's presence will not soon forget his example. To that end, I ask that my colleagues and this chamber join me in observing the loss of Jerry Desmond, further setting his name and character into the permanence of the Congressional Record.


JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

APPENDIX B

First, the union would like to thank you for your time and dedication to the Stonington Police Department and the Town of Stonington. Like you, the union and non-union members of the Stonington Police Department are dedicated to the Town of Stonington and take pride in the service we provide to its residents, business owners, and visitors. One of the primary goals that we all share is to provide the Town of Stonington with a strong, fair, and well-organized police force. The Stonington Police Union and non-union members believe we provide this high-quality service to the town and are committed to continue. With that, the Stonington Police Union and non-union members are endorsing Lieutenant Bryan Schneider of the Stonington Police Department as Chief of Police. As you will find within the signatures of this letter, Lieutenant Schneider has been endorsed unanimously by every member of this police department, to include the union, sworn staff and non-union, civilian staff.

The endorsement of Lieutenant Schneider for Chief is derived from thought and reason. The union and non-union members of the Stonington Police Department realize the decision of the next Chief of Police is the most important decision that will affect member's during their careers. The national debate on police reform and accountability has created new challenges within the police profession that have reached small towns such as Stonington. We are seeking stability and reassurance as we move into the future. We know Lieutenant Schneider will provide us this crucial and much needed stability.

Lieutenant Schneider has proven and provided his leadership to this department for years. It was evident almost immediately upon being promoted to the rank of Sergeant in 2007. Lieutenant Schneider is well respected by every member of this police department and beyond. His reputation as a professional, hard-working leader can be heard by speaking with members of this community to include Fire Chiefs, Emergency Medical Service leaders, Emergency Management personnel, and Town of Stonington Highway, Finance, and Human Services staff. In addition to those community leaders, Lieutenant Schneider's positive reputation precedes him with other leaders in the State to include the Connecticut State's Attorney's Office.

The union and non-union members of the Stonington Police Department would like to be clear with the police commission. Lieutenant Schneider has been managing the Stonington Police Department in almost all of its capacities to include day-to-day operations as well as keeping up with the always changing laws and mandates associated with policing, for several years. Lieutenant Schneider's leadership instills confidence and team work to the entire staff. Lieutenant Schneider provides a positive and productive work environment by listening and caring for his staff. Lieutenant Schneider leads through example, practices positive reinforcement, and also holds staff accountable for their errors or misjudgments.

The union and non-union members are aware of the motion by the police commission to seek applicants for Chief of Police from outside of its current ranks. This has shocked all of us. From the inside looking out, we can't understand why the police commission would consider such a drastic move. While any and all police departments provide a unique service to their citizens by being on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and three hundred and sixty-five days a year, each police department is unique in and of itself. The Stonington Police Department was established in 1938. Since its establishment and up to present day, the Stonington Police Department has developed its own identity. The culture, as

practiced by all of its current staff, union or not, is cultivated in part and most importantly by our interactions with the people we serve in town. What do residents, business owners, and visitors expect from us? What kind of service do we provide? Do we need to change? From the union and non-union members interaction with the residents, business owners, and visitors of this town, we believe our services are well received and appreciated.

Through our many contacts across law enforcement, the union knows that bringing in an outside Chief to a department that already has a culture of high professional standards and integrity has historically proven to be a detriment to the department and the community that it serves. These clashes of culture have resulted in the early retirement of valued officers, division among its ranks, as well as low morale by its staff. In these police departments, the focus turns from providing services to its citizens to other distractions such as divisive and internal conflicts. The union doesn't deny that in some situations a change in leadership or culture is exactly what a police department needs, however we don't perceive Stonington as one of those departments.

Under Lieutenant Schneider's current and continued leadership, the union and non-union members see the Stonington Police Department and its members pulling in the same direction. Lieutenant Schneider understands our town and what it expects from its police department. Lieutenant Schneider deeply cares for this town and the reputation of its police department. He has risen through the ranks, starting as a Community Service Officer, excelling at each step of the way before being promoted to Lieutenant. He has dedicated himself to the Town of Stonington, often sacrificing his off-duty time, for the good of the town and department. Lieutenant Schneider's dedication is noticed by all of us.

In closing, the union would like to highlight the importance and gravity of the police commission's upcoming decision. The ripple effect of severing the continuity of not hiring a Chief from within our ranks will have long lasting detrimental effects on this department. The idea and theory of naturally progressing through the ranks will be lost. The union is concerned what effect not promoting a Chief from within will have on its members with such a capable and proven leader in the process.

Lieutenant Schneider is a proven and qualified leader who should lead the Stonington Police Department as its Chief into the future.

Respectfully,

Stonington Police Union, Local 137 and Stonington Police Department Non-Union Members

Chief Darren Stewart
Captain Todd Olson

Lieutenant Michael Peckham
Sergeant Louis Diamanti
Sergeant Keith Beebe
Detective Sergeant William Morrison
Sergeant Timothy Marley
Sergeant Mario Ritacco
Sergeant Theresa Hersh
Sergeant Matthew Capalbo

Officer Thomas Wholean
Officer Kristy Murray
Detective Gregory Howard
Officer Edward Cullen
Officer Joseph McDermott
K9 Officer Earl Palmer
Officer Brian Discordia
Youth Officer Kerry Browning
Officer Joseph Saunders
Officer Ryan Rathgaber
Detective George Stamatien
Officer Sarah Emery
Officer Ryan Armstrong
Officer Britton Friend
Officer Troy Powell
Officer Jeffery Hewes
Officer Halim Hage
Officer Ryan Rodgers
Officer Peter Siczekiewicz
Officer Nicholas Long
Officer Robert Sundman
Officer Anthony Brito
Officer Christopher Appleton
Officer Thomas Marsh
Officer Seamus Wallace
Officer Kyle Miller

Admin. Asst. Natalie Mitchell
Clerk Jean Silva
Clerk Diana Demarco

ACO David Gelsing
ACO Corina Reese

Unable to Sign Per Town Attorney

ST L R PECKHAM
Sgt Beebe
Sgt Marley #37
Sgt Ritacco #39
Sgt Hersh
Sgt Capalbo
Officer Wholean #14
Officer Murray #17
Det Howard
Officer Cullen
Officer McDermott #22
K9 Officer Palmer #23
Officer Discordia #24
Youth Officer Browning #26
Officer Saunders
Officer Rathgaber #13
Det Stamatien
Officer Emery #8
Officer Armstrong
Officer Friend #25
Officer Powell #23
Officer Hewes
Officer Hage #21
Officer Rodgers #28
Officer Siczekiewicz #16
Officer Long #29
Officer Sundman
Officer Brito #10
Officer Appleton
Officer Marsh #11
Officer Wallace
Officer Miller
Admin. Asst. Mitchell
Clerk Silva
Clerk Demarco
ACO Gelsing
ACO Reese

Dispatcher Timothy Desillier
Dispatcher Allyson Pollart
Dispatcher William Palmer
Dispatcher Paula Singer
Dispatcher Kristen Monk
Dispatcher Michael Napolitano
Dispatcher Cameron Thompson

IT Roger Kizer
Maintenance Chris Gomes
Maintenance Michael Gomes

Chaplain Thomas Hoar
Chaplain Barbara Dakota
Chaplain Clayton Lord
Chaplain Raymond Jones Jr.

Dispatcher Timothy Desillier
Dispatcher Allyson Pollart
Dispatcher William Palmer
Dispatcher Paula Singer
Dispatcher Kristen Monk
Dispatcher Michael Napolitano
Dispatcher Cameron Thompson

Roger Kizer
Chris Gomes
Michael Gomes

Chaplain Thomas Hoar
Chaplain Barbara Dakota
Chaplain Clayton Lord
Chaplain Raymond Jones Jr.

APPENDIX C



International Brotherhood of Police Officers

Local 503 • P.O. Box 341 • Westerly, RI 02891

12/ 22/2021

Honorable Commissioner O'Shaughnessy,

Over the years the Westerly and Stonington Police Departments have established a partnership with one and other sharing mutual borders and aiding one and other in various capacities. Through conversation I was made aware that there is talk of bringing in an outside Chief to the Stonington Police Department.

Our department has experienced this on two occasions. In both instances the department suffered greatly causing irreputable damage to the men, women, and support staff within the department and community. It would be detrimental to the Stonington Police Department to bring in an outside Chief at this juncture in time. This letter is being written having experienced the recruitment of an outside leader.

When it came time to deal with more complicated issues and high stress situations, the outside leadership caused undo stress and further decline in morale and well-being of the department.

The morale, leadership, and ethical issues that the department suffered were extremely disruptive to all its members and staff making it difficult for the day-to-day tasks and routine functions of the department.

The perception of bringing in an outside chief to run the department would infer that the Stonington Police Department does not have the ability to groom leadership from within. For those who have aspired to move up through the ranks and have committed themselves to the department implies they are incapable of leading the men and women of the Stonington Police Department.

If you had a department that was experiencing major issues it might be understandable to hire outside the walls of your department. The Stonington Police Department has more than qualified individuals in place to take over and keep your department running without disruption for a smooth transition.

I would implore you to seek the leadership from within to maintain the level of service that your community is used to and deserves. It is so important to this line of work, especially in the climate that we are now facing to have a leader that has already established respect and rapport with its members.

Respectfully,

The members of Westerly Police Union IBPO Local #503

Union President Anthony Allicchio

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AA', is written over a horizontal line.

APPENDIX D



MYSTIC FIRE DISTRICT

34 BROADWAY, PO BOX 338
MYSTIC, CONNECTICUT 06355
PHONE: 860-572-7567 / FAX: 860-572-0677

Anthony P. Manfredi Jr, Fire Chief / Fire Marshal

December 6, 2021

Stonington Police Commission
173 South Broad Street
Pawcatuck, CT 06379

Dear Commission Members,

It gives me the utmost pleasure to forward you this letter of recommendation on behalf of Lieutenant Bryan Schneider for the position of Stonington Police Chief. It is my opinion, through my professional relationship with L.T. Schneider that he is an excellent candidate for this position. L.T. Schneider and I sit on many committees together and I would like to personally endorse him as your next Police Chief in the Town of Stonington. L.T. Schneider possesses exceptional leadership abilities and communication skills, something that I feel is crucial to have when you hold the position of Police Chief. He continues to coordinate and communicate plans of special events with all the Stonington Fire Departments and has built a great working relationship with all the Emergency Services in the Town. Through my position as the Fire Chief with the Mystic Fire Department, I have witnessed L.T. Schneider's service to our community firsthand and I am fully confident that he has the professional competencies and qualities that are needed to hold this position.

As you know, L.T. Schneider, during his Twenty-One years of service with your department, has always held himself to the highest professional standard that is required by a Police Officer. He has proven to be a competent and committed leader. He is always first to help in any situation and his dedicated and devoted efforts do not go unnoticed by the other Emergency Responders in the Town of Stonington. Time and time again, he has proven his competencies and abilities to perform in the emergency setting and maintains a level head in the event of a stressful emergency.

In closing, L.T. Schneider's training, experience, and dedicated service to the community speaks for itself. It is my hope, that after careful review, you will share in my opinion of Lieutenant Bryan Schneider's capabilities and experience and consider him as the next Stonington Police Chief. The Mystic Fire Department and all surrounding Fire Departments are very lucky to work with the dedicated and professional Police Officers of the Stonington Police Department. The relationships that were built and continue today by Chief Darren Stewart and Captain Todd Olson are second to none.

Best,