

**STONINGTON BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING**

Thursday, August 13, 2020 at 5:00 P.M.

VIRTUAL WEBEX MEETING

Dial: 1-408-418-9388

Enter Access Code: 129 117 1129

-OR-

Streaming live on the Town of Stonington's Facebook page

MEETING MINUTES

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

1. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Gourd called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

2. Remarks of Public

3. New Business

a. Concert at Stonington Lighthouse *VOTE NEEDED*

John Delmhorst, Salt Marsh Opera

Mr. Delmhorst emailed the Police Commission detailing the event. They only anticipate 90-100 attendees, no alcohol will be served, however, attendees can bring their own alcohol. According to Mr. Delmhorst, this year they will not have a shuttle from the Town Dock to the Stonington Lighthouse.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy sees no problem with this event as presented. Commissioner Tabor has no issue, however, he asked if they are restricting the number of attendees to which Mr. Delmhorst stated that they are limiting the number of tickets sold and have maxed out at one hundred. Commissioner Elmer and Commissioner Turner both have no issues with this event. Chief Stewart noted that he is fine with the event not requiring police attendance. He further stated that the event is under the purview of the Stonington Borough to approve and no action is necessary by the Police Commission.

No vote necessary, however, the Board of Police Commissioner's passed on the following comments to the Stonington Borough; that the Police Commission does not see any issues with this event as described.

4. Traffic

a. E-Mail Re: 195 South Off Ramp *POSSIBLE ACTION*

According to Chief Stewart, he received an e-mail from a resident in regard to signage on the Route 95 entrance and exit ramps. Chief Stewart sent this request to the State since signage is handled by State DOT in those areas. Chief Stewart has not heard back from the State; however, he will keep the Police Commission informed.

No Action.

b. E-Mail Re: Denison Homestead Campus Sign Change *POSSIBLE ACTION*

Jess Brown, Denison Homestead Trustee

Mr. Brown would like the Denison Homestead Museum sign on Jerry Browne Rd. at Pequotsepos Rd. replaced with a sign reading Denison Homestead Campus. He is working with the State of Connecticut DOT on changing the attraction signs along Route 95 and they are asking that the name stay consistent on signs throughout the area. Mr. Brown noted that Town Highway will be able to put the new wording on the sign. Chief Stewart agreed that the sign at Pequotsepos Rd. at Jerry Browne Rd. needs to be changed in order to be consistent with the other signs in the area and, once this is done, the State will match the signs along Route 95 to also read Denison Homestead Campus. Commissioner Turner stated that he feels that this is a positive change.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy made a motion to change the strip sign from Denison Homestead Museum to Denison Homestead Campus as it is located on the corner of Jerry Browne Rd. at Pequotsepos Rd. Motion seconded by Commissioner Turner. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

c. E-Mail Re: Overflow Parking – Mason's Island Road *POSSIBLE ACTION*

According to Chief Stewart, it seems that this spot has become popular for kayaking, fishing, clamming, etc. He noted that many vehicles have been parking on private roads. The fire department has been making sure they can still maneuver on the roads with the additional parking in the area. Chief Stewart referred to the pictures in the Police Commissioner's packet which show all the vehicles are parked off the roadway. Chief Stewart stated that, at some point in time, this area will need to be addressed if people begin to park in the road. Chief Stewart recommends the Police Commission does not take any action at this time. Dubois Dr. is a private road and the fire department could make the road "no parking fire lane," if necessary. Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy commented that the Town clamming map shows parking areas on the east side of the bridge and parking on Dubois Dr. and Orchard Hill Dr. as parking areas designated by the town. Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy feels that if the area is marked as no parking it will push people into the neighborhood to park.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy made a motion to table this item pending ongoing review and observation. Motion seconded by Commissioner Tabor. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

d. E-Mail Re: Request for Speed Limit Sign – Palmer Neck Road *POSSIBLE ACTION*

Steve McCabe, Resident, Palmer Neck Rd.

According to Chief Stewart, he has received a request asking for 15mph speed limit signs on Palmer Neck Rd. in the area where the road is one-way with alternating traffic. The State of Connecticut has designated Palmer Neck Rd. as 25mph. Chief Stewart noted that the only thing the Police Commission can do is put in a yellow 15mph advisory sign which cannot be enforced by the police. Chief Stewart sees no problem with adding the 15mph sign on either side of the road, just south of the bridge. Mr. McCabe stated that a sign was in place, however, it is now missing. Chief Stewart mentioned that the road was never officially 15mph and was always 25mph as designated by the State. Mr. McCabe noted that traffic on Barn Island has increased recently and he is in favor of installing the advisory signs.

Commissioner Elmer made a motion to install 15 mph yellow advisory signs at the entrance to the

Barn Island Wildlife Refuge. Motion seconded by Commissioner Tabor with the addition that the neighborhood be informed that the police will not be able to enforce the 15mph speed to which Mr. McCabe stated he will inform the neighbors. No further discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

e. E-Mail Re: SHMC Request for Police Presence on Water *POSSIBLE ACTION*

Jesse Diggs, Vice Chairman, Borough of Stonington Harbor Management Commission
Jay Spaulding, Chair, Borough of Stonington Harbor Management Commission

Mr. Diggs noted that people have been violating "no wake" and other ordinances. He would like to see more police presence on the water. Mr. Diggs noted that the SHMC has funds available to help. Chief Stewart noted that, at the moment, the Department is in need of personnel. Two people that run the police boat have retired and Chief Stewart is hoping to get additional officers qualified on the boat. Chief Stewart noted that the boat has been out at least one day on the weekends. The police boat has been utilized this season for marine calls and there were three marine calls this past month. Chief Stewart reiterated that running the police boat is subject to the personnel available, which has been stretched thin.

Mr. Diggs stated that he hopes to see more police presence on the weekend and he is in favor of the Department getting more personnel available for the police boat. Chief Stewart mentioned that there are three people in training for the boat and a new officer coming on that will also be able to operate it. Mr. Diggs reiterated that they have the funds and are willing to use them to help get the police boat out on the water. Mr. Diggs further asked if there is anything the Department would like to see changed at the dock to which Chief Stewart noted that several items have been upgraded.

Chief Stewart commented that the Department has tentative approval for a matching grant for an upgrade in boat's electronic equipment.

f. E-Mail Re: Traffic Concern – Commercial Vehicles/Trucks on Residential Road – Tabled from July Meeting *POSSIBLE ACTION*

Chief Stewart noted that this item was tabled from the July meeting. The concerns come as a result of road construction by Aquarian Water. Chief Stewart noted that the commercial vehicles are using public roads and the resident has been informed that no action will be taken.

g. E-Mail Re: Mechanic Street – Tabled from July Meeting *POSSIBLE ACTION*

Chief Stewart recommends tabling this item. They still need the data from the speed sign which had some technical difficulties.

Tabled to next meeting, awaiting data from the speed sign.

5. Approval of Minutes from Monday, July 13, 2020 Special Meeting *VOTE NEEDED*

Commissioner Tabor noted a spelling correction on page one, insure is incorrect, it should be ensure.

Commissioner Tabor made a motion to approve the minutes for the Monday, July 13, 2020 Special Meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

6. Approval of Minutes from Thursday, July 16, 2020 Special Meeting *VOTE NEEDED*

Commissioner Tabor noted a clarification of multiple visits made by Commissioner Tabor to Cottrell Street.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy made a motion to approve the minutes for the Thursday, July 16, 2020 Special Meeting as submitted with the correction as noted by Commissioner Tabor. Motion seconded by Commissioner Turner. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

7. Report of the Chief of Police

a. Budget Report (Both FY 19/20 & FY 20/21)

According to Chief Stewart, the Department was well into the black and some funds were turned back in to Finance at the end of the 19/20 fiscal year. He further noted that it is still early into the current fiscal year.

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commission that it will cost approximately \$7-8,000 to replace the fire alarm board, pull stations and smoke alarms that failed after being hit by a power surge during the last storm. According to Chief Stewart, this may be an insurance claim.

b. Monthly Statistics

Chief Stewart stated that there were thirty-four pistol permits processed in July, which is an all-time high. There are already more than twelve for the month of August so far. Chief Stewart commented that larcenies are up, there have been multiple vehicles broken into, twelve assaults, fifty-eight disorderly conducts and a variety of scams. Chief Stewart further noted that the police boat has been out and that Mystic has been busy.

Commissioner Tabor looked at the data and was curious if some of the changes are Covid-19 related, specifically the decrease in the number of Summonses for All Others, parking tickets issued, and motor vehicle stops. Chief Stewart stated that the decrease in numbers are absolutely Covid-19 related. The officers are only initiating people during serious violations or emergencies. Chief Stewart commented that there is only one CSO this year which has resulted in the lower number of parking ticket issued.

c. Alarm Report

d. Special Event Schedule

Chief Stewart commented that the event schedule has been light this year.

e. Memo Re: Teresa Hersh – Good Job

Chief Stewart received a memo from First Selectwoman Chesebrough and Human Services Director Theodore regarding Officer Hersh and her outreach to the public during the pandemic. Chief Stewart gave credit to Captain Olson for putting forth the initiative for Officer Hersh to provide services to the public. She began Bedtime Stories for the children during the pandemic, worked on the Chaplain program, reached out to immobile residents and also delivered meals. Officer Hersh has done a great job and has been making a difference in the community. They would like a full-time officer for this purpose, however, there is still the current issue with manpower.

f. Letter Re: Crossing Guard Eugene Caron Resignation

Crossing Guard Caron has been with the Department for five years. He has submitted a letter to resign from this position. Chief Stewart stated that he did a nice job and a letter has already been sent to him. They will be looking into finding a replacement, however, there is a reserve crossing guard to fill in.

g. Policy Update Process

According to Chief Stewart, there are certain policies the Police Academy requires of all Departments. There is a two to five-year process to get national accreditation. Due to Covid-19, there have been parts of the budget that have not been used, for example, CSO and School Safety. Chief Stewart recommends that they get going on reviewing policies and procedures. There is a basic proposal outlining what it would take to get going on a complete review of the policies and procedures and update them. Forty to forty-five Departments utilize this service. Chief Stewart will go to the Board of Finance to transfer funds to cover that service.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy highly recommends that the Department moves ahead with this item and that it will be money well spent. There is a \$20K estimate for Attorney Daigle to update the policies. Chief Stewart gave a brief summary of Attorney Daigle's credentials. Chief Stewart will reach out to the Board of Finance; however, line item changes cannot be made until January 1st. Commissioner Tabor, does not have any objections, however, he would like a copy of the proposal. Chief Stewart noted that a copy will be going out to all the Police Commissioners. The Department may need to assign someone to be a policy liaison with Attorney Daigle's office. Chief Stewart noted that it is very early in the game but the Department needs to get ahead of it. Chief Stewart may invite Attorney Daigle to meet with the Police Commission.

h. Promotional Process / Hiring Update

Chief Stewart will be announcing tomorrow that the Sergeant promotion process will begin. The written exam is set for September 22, one week later there will be an oral board with a panel of supervisors, and then the candidates will go before the Police Commissioners.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy recently reviewed the use of force reports. He commented that he spent a few hours looking at the use of force reports for the last two years. According to Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy, there was nothing out of policy and everything looked fine.

Chief Stewart stated that he has spent a lot of time reviewing the Police Accountability Bill. There will be trial body cameras arriving soon and Lt. Schneider will coordinate these trials. Chief Stewart commented that the Department needs to go before Board of Finance for funding for the body and dashboard cameras and the storage equipment. This may possible be a CIP item. The Bill will only reimburse 30% for body and dashboard cameras. Chief Stewart noted that the Department will be competing with other Departments for equipment and availability. He has received initial quotes, but there have been no negotiations yet. Other costs associated with the Police Accountability Bill are mental health assessments, accreditations, drug testing, etc. Commissioner Tabor noted in regard to dashboard and body cameras, there is not only the initial expense for the hardware but additional costs for retrieval and storage, etc. Chief Stewart also pointed out that the redactions that need to be made can be extremely time consuming. Groton Town Police Department has a full-time position designated to this purpose. Chief Stewart commented that when Covid-19 is over the Department will continue to be pulled in various directions and they will need to be able to adapt to the new way of policing. Chief Stewart thinks the Police Commission will be getting questions in regard to parking on Washington Street, he recommends the Commissioners familiarize themselves with the area.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy commented that people walk in the streets and there are numerous streets that do not have sidewalks. Chief Stewart noted that sidewalks on Washington Street were part of the Cottrell Street discussion.

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

8. Consent Agenda

- a. Letter: Craig Burge Retirement
- b. Letter: Thomas Paige Retirement
- c. Letter: James McCaffery Retirement
- d. Letter: Thank You – Amy Hargraves
- e. Letter: Thank You – Dr. Riley
- f. Letter: Evidence Based Police De-Escalation Training
- g. Letter: Thank You – Clare Schlink
- h. Memo: Officer Kristy Rebello – Great Job
- i. Letter Re: Mask Wearing – Downtown Mystic Area
- j. Letter Re: Request for No Parking Sign – Mason's Island Gatehouse
- k. Letter: Thank You – North Stonington Baptist Church
- l. Letter: Thank You – Charles & Elaina Graves
- m. Letter: Thank You – Trisha Neilson
- n. Letter: Thank You – Lisa & David Cole
- o. E-Mail Re: Cancellation of Stonington Cross Country SK

Commissioner Tabor made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Motion seconded by Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved

Chief Stewart commented that seven or eight thank yous have come in to the Department which shows the community continues to praise and support the Department.

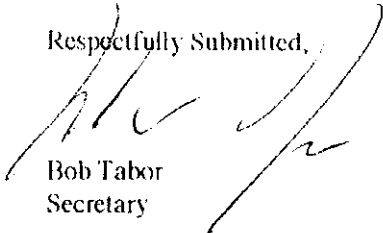
Update: the latest hire should be starting September 8th at which time the swearing in ceremony will be held.

9. Adjourn

At p.m., 6:03 Commissioner Turner made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Elmer, all in favor, motion approved. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Bob Tabor
Secretary