

**STONINGTON BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING**

Thursday, January 14, 2021 at 5:00 P.M.

VIRTUAL WEBEX MEETING

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-OR-

Streaming live on the Town of Stonington's Facebook page

MEETING MINUTES

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

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 entire Board of Police Commissioners, Chief Stewart and Captain Olson for attending the unconscious bias training. Chairman O'Shaughnessy found it very interesting and rewarding. He noted that Chief Stewart will address the Department's staffing issues in the Report of the Chief of Police. He further noted that the Stuff-A-Cruiser event was extremely successful.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy commented that 2020 was a tough year for law enforcement. Three hundred fourteen officers were lost and one hundred and ninety six of those officers were lost due to Covid-19. Already fourteen officers have been lost since the beginning of 2021 which is more than at this point last year. Chairman O'Shaughnessy took note of the loss of Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick. He called for a moment of silence for all the officers lost in the line of duty.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy also noted the loss of former Stonington Director of Planning, Jason Vincent. He stated that Mr. Vincent did wonderful things for the Town of Stonington and that he was a hard charge and we will miss him greatly.

2. Remarks of the Public

None.

3. New Business

***Moved the discussion of Agenda Item **5a. Mary Hall Road / River Road Speeding** to now. See discussion below under **5a.**

a. Revised Mental Health Policy *ACTION ITEM*

Chief Stewart noted that this is in regard to Public Act No. 20-1 and sets forth the parameters of the Mental Health Policy. He remarked that the Department will need to adopt these guidelines issued by the Police Academy.

Commissioner Bates made a motion to accept the revised Mental Health Policy as passed out by POST. Motion seconded by Vice Chairman Tabor. Discussion: Commissioner Elmer asked if there is already a system in place for officers mental health to which Chief Stewart stated that there is. Vice Chairman Tabor suggests that Chief Stewart reports back to the Police Commission in regard to what was completed yearly under this policy to which Chief Stewart stated that he can report back, however, he noted that the numbers will vary every year for a number of reasons which he further explained. Commissioner Bates clarified that this is a mental health check in or wellness check, not a test that one passes or fails. She suggests they use the correct nomenclature. No further discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

b. POSTC DV Model Policy Update *ACTION ITEM*

Chief Stewart stated that every year POSTC comes out with a correction in the Domestic Violence Policy. This is given to all the officers in order to be familiar with changes to the policy. This update comes from the Academy and Chief Stewart recommends the Police Commission approves this update.

Commissioner Turner made a motion to accept the POSTC DV Model Policy Update as presented. Motion seconded by Commissioner Bates. Discussion: Commissioner Turner asked Chief Stewart if domestic violence situations are one of the most dangerous situations for officers to which Chief Stewart stated that they are the most dangerous next to car accidents. Chief Stewart further stated that they are trying to get a Domestic Violence Coordinator involved with the Police Department and Human Services. He further discussed the Domestic Violence Policy. No further discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Commissioner Bates presented a suggestion to the Police Commission that when any organization or entity in Town wants to make a request regarding changes to signage, etc., to coordinate internally, then to submit a letter officially signed off by the organizations Chief Executive Officer or Chair of the Board, etc. This will allow the Police Commission to be clear on what is being requested and by whom. This would make it easier for everyone and to avoid confusion that was seen last month with the Denison Homestead miscommunication. Chairman O'Shaughnessy thinks the Police Commissioners should think about this, then discuss further at the next meeting.

4. Old Business

a. Clyde's Cider Mill Parking *POSSIBLE ACTION ITEM* For February Presentation

Chairman O'Shaughnessy stated that this has been an ongoing problem for years. His thought is to table this to next month and send letters to neighbors and to Clydes. The Police Commission also needs to go out and talk to those involved. Chief Stewart recommended doing this while they are still in the "off" season and he commented that the issue is certainly worthy of a discussion. Chairman O'Shaughnessy stated that they need to find a balance between the needs of the business and of the community. Commissioner Turner thinks it is a good idea to have all the players involved in order to find a solution.

b. Veterans Memorial at Police Department

Danielle Chesebrough, Stonington First Selectwoman
Richard Brooks, Buzzi Memorial

First Selectwoman Chesebrough stated that the first step for the memorial is to find a location and the Police Department's side lawn seems to be the best location. The next step will be to go to Planning. According to First Selectwoman Chesebrough, the Department of Public Works will be able to maintain the memorial. Mr. Brooks stated that the maintenance will be minimal. Vice Chairman Tabor asked about the exact location and the design. First Selectwoman Chesebrough clarified the location and displayed a model of the design. Mr. Brooks originally wanted to incorporate the flag but it is not necessary since there is already a flag in front of the building. It was asked if there will be night time illumination? First Selectwoman Chesebrough commented that there is some lighting already in the area but they can look into uplighting. She further mentioned that funding still needs to be raised and they are estimating it will cost \$180,000. Chief Stewart commented that there is plenty of space for this memorial and that there are currently seven veterans on the force. This is a good location since they should not have to work about vandalism. The memorial will be very visible and will be a tribute to our veterans.

Commissioner Elmer made a motion to approve the location of the veterans memorial to be placed on the Police Department grounds. Motion seconded by Vice Chairman Tabor. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

c. Update from Radio Consultant Richard LaSaracina on Cameras and Radio System

Mr. LaSaracina informed the Police Commission that under the video system update for headquarters, he received the workstation for dispatch. He briefly gave an update on the workstation and noted that he has installed the workstation so they will have better video performance. He further noted that they downloaded seven arrest applications through the month of December. Once the server is installed, it is easier to use the system. Chairman O'Shaughnessy asked if there was a problem with the video at the cell blocks? Mr. LaSaracina noted that the problem will go away when the new workstation is completely installed.

Mr. LaSaracina reviewed with the Police Commission what needs to be done on the VHS side. It is time to look at alternatives for the VHF system. The Taugwonk site needs the most

attention. Mr. LaSaracina went out and designed three different scenarios the first being the simulcast system, the second the P25 system which converts to digital and the third to remove the existing copper phone wire infrastructure. Mr. LaSaracina explained that the Fire Departments use the radios differently from the Police Department and he wants any transition to be a simple transfer. The P25 system is designed so the Fire Departments can use their Legacy equipment until it can be replaced and it will not disrupt how the Fire Departments operate. He noted that this will be a significant capital investment. They will need at least three sites around Town each costing approximately \$180,000. Mr. LaSaracina briefly explained the process of rebuilding the VHF system and budgeting for it. He is not completely finished with the engineering. The Prentice Williams site will need an eighty to one hundred foot tower. He asks the Police Commission to think about whether or not this site should be pursued or if he should engineer around it, at no additional cost. He noted that they design the maps for 120% of the jurisdiction. Vice Chairman Tabor voiced his concerns and asked where the coordination point is with the Fire Departments since they have a material interest. Mr. LaSaracina noted that the Police Department is responsible for the VHF systems that the Town operates and anything related to public safety falls under the Police Department's purview. They need to be respectful of the Fire Department's needs. It is important that the infrastructure is built so that the Fire Departments can use their existing equipment and they can update when ready.

According to Mr. LaSaracina, the eight Stonington Schools emergency radios are still on the Legacy system. He did some research into a grant to cover the cost of \$38,000 to upgrade the radios in the schools. It is a FEMA grant, the Emergency Performance Grant or EMPG.

Commissioner Bates asked about what is currently on the Prentice Williams site to which Mr. LaSaracina stated that there are three telephone polls and two cabinets surrounded by arborvitaes. It is an eyesore and does nothing for the Department as it is now. Mr. LaSaracina can come up with some diagrams of what it could look like. He reiterated that he needs at least three sites and he needs the Police Commission to decide on the sites. Chairman O'Shaughnessy feels that if removing the Prentice Williams site improves the neighborhood and it can be worked around then that would be a good decision.

Chief Stewart noted that this needs to get done and that the Police Department went to the State system since they were relying on an outdated system. He noted that they do have to make an upgrade to the old system and the Fire Departments have to be involved to ensure their radios are working correctly. Chief Stewart does not recommend using half a million dollars on the old system. He discussed why the Fire Departments like the features of their current radios. The Police Commission needs to pick and choose the important things that need to be done but Finance will not want to put money into the old system. The Police Department has no desire to go back to the VHF system and only use it to talk to the Fire Departments. Chief Stewart recommends taking Mr. LaSaracina's lead on how to keep the system up and running without it costing a ton of money. They need to bring all seven Fire Departments to the table. He noted that the Fire Departments do not want the noise cancellation radios. Mr. LaSaracina noted that the problem is that there are too many

participants to all agree on the correct technology. Going to the P25 system is costly for each fire district.

Mr. LaSaracina highly suggests repairing the Taugwonk site first with a new antenna and repeater. The Taugwonk site should cost between \$7-\$13,000 for a new antenna and transmission line, which also includes converting the radio that is there to a Fire Department radio. This fix will minimize issues that are elsewhere. From there they can decide what to do going forward. Chief Stewart commented that there is money left in the radio CIP account. Chief Stewart gave an overview of the Fire Department's jurisdictions and dispatch. Vice Chairman Tabor noted that they need to decide on a longer term solution. Chairman O'Shaughnessy stated that they have an obligation to public safety and recommends moving ahead with Mr. LaSaracina's recommendations at the Taugwonk site then to have a meeting with all the Fire Departments. Mr. LaSaracina stated that, in a perfect world, the Fire Departments would be on the State 800mhz system with three or four conventional 800mhz frequencies that they could repeat throughout Town. Commissioner Bates suggested that Mr. LaSaracina and Chief Stewart have some further discussions and come back to the Police Commission with a shared proposal.

Commissioner Elmer made a motion to approve the recommendations of Mr. LaSaracina for \$12-\$15,000 to bring the Taugwonk site up to operation so they will not have a failure and also, to have Chief Stewart and Mr LaSaracina have further discussions then come back to the next Police Commission meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Bates. No further discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

***At 6:25 p.m. Commissioner Bates excused herself from this meeting.

There was some further discussion about the radios needed in the schools.

5. Traffic / Boating

a. Mary Hall / River Road Speeding *ACTION ITEM*

*** See above notation under 3. **New Business**

Susan Alston, 18 Mary Hall Rd.

Ms. Alston informed the Police Commission that she spoke with an officer about her concerns but also wanted to bring this issue to the attention of the Police Commission. She observes speeding and vehicles not stopping at the stop sign at Mary Hall Rd. and River Rd. and she noted that it is very dangerous. She suggests having the police out in the area to monitor the traffic and possibly placing a cruiser there to deter this behavior. Chief Stewart noted that the neighborhood has changed over the years, it has doubled in size and is used as a cut through. He is very familiar with the area. He further stated that, in 1996/97 they put in the three way stop. Chief Stewart commented that the Department is dealing with speeding all over Town. He noted that Ms. Alston's issue with one particular vehicle has been addressed. Chief Stewart

asked her to let him know particular times she sees any problems. The only way to slow them down is to have an officer with a cruiser down in the area.

Ms. Alston reiterated that she wanted the Department to pay attention to this area and she has noticed that they have been out in the area recently. She thanked the Police Commissioners for their time. Chief Stewart told her not to hesitate to call if the issue continues.

**b. State Traffic Project: Route 27 at South Driveway to Mystic Seaport Parking Lot
*ACTION ITEM***

The State will be reconfiguring the traffic light. Chief Stewart forwarded this to the Fire Department and the Department of Public Works.

**6. Approval of Minutes from Thursday, December 10, 2020 Regular Meeting *VOTE
NEEDED***

Vice Chairman Tabor noted two minor corrections.

Commissioner Elmer made a motion to approve the minutes for the Thursday, December 10, 2020 Regular Meeting as corrected. Motion seconded by Commissioner Turner. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

7. Report of the Chief of Police

Chief Stewart briefly spoke about the CT Law Enforcement Memorial and the Families of Fallen Officers. He also noted that the Stuff-A-Cruiser event went really well.

a. Budget Report

b. Monthly Report

c. Yearly Statistics

d. Alarm Report

e. Special Events Schedule

f. Return of Weapons Under 1033 Program Per Public Act

According to Chief Stewart, the Department returned weapons under the 1033 Program.

g. Daigle Law Group Agreement

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commission that he signed this agreement and this item is progressing.

h. POSTC Memo Re: Officer Certification Renewal

i. Mental Health Use of Social Workers Paper

Included in the Police Commissioner's packet is a paper written by Chief Stewart about the feasibility study on the impact of the use of social workers by the police and how this could be utilized as a model throughout the State.

j. Vending Machine at Police Headquarters *ACTION ITEM*

Chief Stewart stated that they used to have something similar at headquarters years ago. He commented that under the State contract there is a vending machine company that installs and maintains the machine at no cost to the Department.

No issues were seen by the Police Commission in regard to vending machines at Police Headquarters.

k. Covid-19 Update

According to Chief Stewart, everyone has gotten the first shot of the Covid-19 vaccine except for two. He stated that shots for individuals over seventy-five are now available. Chief Stewart briefly explained the registration process. He noted that he had no side effects other than a sore arm. Selectwoman Strunk gave an update that the system to get the vaccine will get better soon and that Ledge Light has been working 24/7 on getting the vaccines distributed.

According to Chief Stewart, so far, one dispatcher and one officer were out with Covid-19 and some officers have had to quarantine.

l. Resignation: Officer Sousa *VOTE NEEDED*

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commissioners that Officer Sousa had resigned. He recently returned from deployment and reflected on coming back to the Department. In his resignation, he mentioned the new Police Accountability Bill and that he also purchased property outside the Department's policy.

Vice Chairman Tabor made a motion to accept the resignation of Officer Sousa.. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commissioners that another officer will be resigning soon and has also cited the Police Accountability Bill as a factor. They will have five openings to fill.

m. Recruitment Update

According to Chief Stewart, Sergeant Hersh will be putting together a recruitment video. Chief Stewart has some certified officers come in and, if it works out, it will go very quickly to get them on board. Chief Stewart has reserved some slots at the Police Academy.

n. Training Update

Chief Stewart is looking to see if the unconscious bias training will be extended to the supervisors and also the officers, however, he feels that State will be requiring some sort of similar training in the near future.

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commission that he had a conversation with the parking study people in Downtown Mystic in regard to their ideas and plans.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that there were no use of force incidents since the last meeting. Chief Stewart will put together a report with all the use of force incidents for 2020.

Commissioner Elmer asked if there has been an increase in pistol permit applications? Chief Stewart replied that the Department has seen a 330% increase in pistol permit applications compared to 2019. The Department has already had sixteen to eighteen applications since the first of the year. According to Chief Stewart, pistol permit applications tend to go up during election years.

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

8. Consent Agenda

- a. Letter Re: Parking West End of Haley Street**
- b. Letter Re: Thank You - Lois McDonald**
- c. Letter Re: No Shave November**
- d. Letter Re: Thank You - Camille Chamberlain**
- e. Memo Re: Earl Palmer 15 Year Anniversary**
- f. DOT Crosswalk Permits**
- g. POSTC Memo Re: Certification Expiration**
- h. Memo Re: Officer Hage - Outstanding Work**

Chief Stewart commented on Officer Hage's outstanding work. Chairman O'Shaughnessy asked Chief Stewart to extend the Police Commission's thanks to Officer Hage.

According to Chief Stewart, next month there will be information from Sergeant Hersh and Pawcatuck Fire Department about the exemplary performance of Officer High.

Commissioner Turner made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda. Motion seconded by Vice Chairman Tabor. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

Vice Chairman Tabor commented on Chief Stewart's Use of Social Workers paper and asked if Chief Stewart could keep the Police Commission informed about how he sees these things

progressing with other departments and how the new approach is working out. Chief Stewart briefly discussed this paper and the coordination with 211 in trying to educate the public about when to call 911 or rather 211. He further noted that it is not uncommon practice for Stonington to work alongside social workers and he mentioned Deanna Rushlow's former position and her successful role with the Department. The Department has also started a pilot program with Mobile Outreach to facilitate mental health related calls.

9. Adjourn

At 6:58 p.m., Vice Chairman Tabor made a motion to adjourn. Motion seconded by Commissioner Turner. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Robert Elmer
Secretary