

**STONINGTON BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING**

Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 5:00 P.M.

VIRTUAL WEBEX MEETING

Dial: 1-408-418-9388

Enter Access Code: 129 570 3619

-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 & Captain Todd Olson

1. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

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

Pastor Cal Lord, Chaplain for the Stonington Police Department shared with the Police Commissioners that the Chaplains have been meeting once a month. He also noted that in the past month, the Chaplains were called out to three separate calls. The Chaplains showed the officers their thanks by providing them with breakfast and lunch one day in March. Also, the Chaplains joined in on the parade for Captain Desmond. Pastor Lord commented that he participated in the "4x4x48 challenge".

Pastor Lord informed the Police Commissioners that the Chaplains are taking a course on Disaster Spiritual Care and have been working with Sergeant Hersh. Every day, the Chaplains will be praying for a Department member. The Chaplains have also sent individual notes to members of the Department saying great job. Chairman O'Shaughnessy thanked the Chaplains for their work. Chief Stewart noted that he and the Department appreciates everything the Chaplains have been doing. Commissioner Bates shared her gratitude for the work the Chaplains have been doing to say thank you to the front-line workers.

2. Remarks of the Public

None.

3. New Business

a. YMCA Events: Tarzan Brown Race & Turkey Trot & Dip *VOTE NEEDED*

Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that this is a regular event. Chief Stewart stated that this event is usually not a problem and it is good to be seeing events come back, even though this event is not scheduled until the fall. The Tarzan Brown Race goes only a little way into the Town of Stonington. Chief Stewart noted that the Turkey Trot may require hiring an officer. Proper insurance has been submitted.

Commissioner Bates made a motion to approve the Tarzan Brown Race to be held November 7, 2021 as presented, subject to the requirements the Administration may deem necessary, and upon proof of

proper insurance. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Commissioner Tabor made a motion to approve the Turkey Trot & Dip to be held November 25, 2021 as presented, subject to the requirements the Administration may deem necessary, and upon proof of proper insurance. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

b. Good Friday Walk *VOTE NEEDED*

Chief Stewart stated that this walk is done every year. This event is outside and is usually about thirty to fifty people. The walk also goes into Groton as well. Proper insurance has been submitted.

Commissioner Turner made a motion to approve the Good Friday Walk to be held April 2, 2021 as presented, subject to the requirements the Administration may deem necessary, and upon proof of proper insurance. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

c. Planning & Zoning Application: Whaler's Inn *COMMENTS NEEDED*

Land Use Attorney Bill Sweeney, Partner at TCORS Attorneys, representing the Whaler's Inn
Amanda Arling, General Manager of the Whalers Inn
Mark Spruance, Construction Manager, Ground Up Construction, LLC
Norman Thibeault, Killingly Engineering Associates, Project Engineer

Attorney Sweeney noted that the Oddfellows building at 11 Cottrell Street was purchased by the holding company that owns the Whalers Inn. They are proposing fifteen parking spaces to serve the building. He showed an overview image of the property. The Oddfellows building is currently occupied. There are retail spaces below and four residential units above. There is little if any off-street parking. Currently this is legal, non-conforming. They are looking at the potential to build some off-street parking on the vacant lot to provide employee, customer and resident parking for this building. Attorney Sweeney shared the plan to merge the vacant lot with the Oddfellows building lot. The primary access will be off of Haley Street and out the existing curb cut onto Haley Street. There will be a total of fifteen parking spaces. The preexisting alleyway off Cottrell Street has to stay clear for emergency access. This access will not be encouraged for general use. Traffic flow in the parking lot will flow counterclockwise. Currently, residents park in the driveway behind the building and the customers and employees try to find street parking. The proposed parking is set back from the neighbors. They will provide landscaping, lighting, fencing and safety and security without lighting up the sky.

Vice Chairman Tabor asked Attorney Sweeney about the emergency access off of Cottrell Street and noted his concerns with traffic exiting onto Cottrell Street and the pedestrian traffic. He strongly suggests forcing traffic to exit onto Haley Street. Attorney Sweeney is addressing the traffic flow in the lot as only entering and exiting onto Haley Street; however, they cannot block the other access since it is needed for emergency use. They will put in appropriate signage noting that the exit onto Cottrell Street is for emergency use only. The goal is for a pedestrian friendly environment. Vice Chairman Tabor asked about the two lots being in two different zones. Attorney Sweeney noted that they will make it a split zone for parking and he further explained the regulations. Vice Chairman Tabor asked if there are any future plans on changing the footprint and use of the building and would that have any impact on the parking as proposed? Attorney Sweeney noted that if they were to change the program, they would have to come back to the Town for approval. The client intends to preserve this building and is taking a very

modest step to make the building more viable and to take some of the parking off the street. Vice Chairman Tabor asked if there are designated spots for the tenants? Attorney Sweeney noted that would be an internal control issue. He stated that there is a benefit to mixed use parking.

Commissioner Turner thanked Ms. Arling and Attorney Sweeney for taking this initiative. Commissioner Turner asked if they have considered valet parking for the Whalers Inn to which Ms. Arling stated they have considered it, however, it is logistically challenging. They have also considered outsourcing it to a valet company. This year, they will be taking a more active role in parking and intend on having a lot monitor this summer. Attorney Sweeney noted the need to identify satellite parking and make it work effectively. Commissioner Bates commented that shared parking is very successful in many settings and it is an important part of the answer to the challenge in Mystic. She thanked Ms. Arling and Attorney Sweeney for their efforts and added that it is important to the health of the economy in Mystic.

Commissioner Elmer made a motion to pass along the following comments to Planning and Zoning; that the Police Commission sees no issues with traffic, parking or safety with this application as presented, with the expectation that the alleyway on the north end of the building be marked emergency use only. Motion seconded by Vice Chairman Tabor. Discussion: Chief Stewart commented to not only move this forward but also, if it suits the Commission, to support this because the Commission has been involved in the parking studies in Mystic in trying to find parking spaces on Cottrell Street, etc. So, it is not just a matter of moving it forward to Planning & Zoning, it is supporting the efforts of the Whaler's Inn since they have put a lot of work into this as has the Police Commission along with the Town of Groton with the parking study. Chairman O'Shaughnessy asked Chief Stewart to add his comments to his letter to Planning and Zoning. No further discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Commissioner Tabor questioned if there is a need to have any additional cameras on the property? Chairman O'Shaughnessy believes there is sufficient coverage.

d. Planning & Zoning Application: Ocean Breeze Land Co., LLC *COMMENTS NEEDED*

Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that this was approved previously. They constructed the deck but not fully so this is to complete the deck expansion. Chief Stewart commented that they have plenty of parking. Commissioner Bates offered that she is pleased to see the opportunity for more outdoor seating during this time.

Commissioner Bates made a motion to pass along the following comments to Planning and Zoning; that the Police Commission sees no issues with traffic, parking or safety with this application as presented. Motion seconded by Commissioner Turner. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

e. Request for Weekend Flea Market & Farm – 29 Old Stonington Road *POSSIBLE ACTION ITEM*

Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that this is the former Sailor Ed's property that is currently for sale. Chairman O'Shaughnessy expressed his concern that the Police Commission does not have enough details to approve this request at this time.

Tabled until April.

4. Old Business

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

Chief Stewart gave a brief summary. Mr. LaSaracina has wrapped up the installation of the cameras and the Department will be conducting a brief training in order to utilize the system. According to Chief

Stewart, nothing has changed in regard to the radio system. Mr. LaSaracina will be at the next meeting to give an update on the Taugwonk site and the radio system.

5. Traffic / Boating

a. E-Mail Re: Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons

Chairman O'Shaughnessy stated that this is for mid-street crosswalks, not at intersections and only on local roads. This could be installed near the aquarium. Chief Stewart noted that the State replaced some signage near the Denison Homestead and that area may be a potential spot. This would be helpful for the Mystic Aquarium, the Mystic Seaport and the Denison Homestead Campus, if they are agreeable with it. Chief Stewart suggests sending a letter to the State to install one on Route 27 in between the two parking lots at the Mystic Seaport. Commissioner Elmer asked if the sites have to be identified to the State before they provide the beacons to which Chief Stewart stated yes. Vice Chairman Tabor suggested one of the locations on Route 27 be in the proximity of the Seaport's employee parking lot. Chief Stewart will forward this to the State.

6. Approval of Minutes from Thursday, February 11, 2021 Regular Meeting *VOTE NEEDED*

Commissioner Elmer made a motion to approve the minutes for the Thursday, February 11, 2021 Regular Meeting as presented. Motion seconded by Vice Chairman Tabor. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

7. Report of the Chief of Police

Chief Stewart thanked the Police Commission for providing Dunkin Donut gift cards to the Department. He also thanked First Selectwoman Chesebrough for bringing over trays of cookies to the Department. He thanked everyone for the acts of kindness.

a. Budget Report

According to Chief Stewart, we are 63.5% through the fiscal year and have used 61.5%. The Department is over by 12% in the regular overtime budget. Chief Stewart commented that the Department is financially in decent shape moving into the fourth quarter of the fiscal year.

b. Monthly Statistics

There has been an increase in accidents, medical assists, and thefts from and of vehicles. Chief Stewart is anticipating having a very busy summer. Downtown Mystic has already been very busy each weekend.

c. Alarm Report

d. Special Events Schedule

One event is currently on the schedule.

e. Axon Quote & Bid Waiver *VOTE NEEDED*

According to Chief Stewart, this is in regard to the body and dash camera quote. He praised Lieutenant Schneider for the outstanding job he has done negotiating with the vendor. Lieutenant Schneider was able to lower the cost from over \$600,000 to \$464,000. This figure does not include the potential of a thirty percent matching grant from the State. Chief Stewart appreciates all of Lieutenant Schneider's efforts to get this program working.

Lieutenant Schneider went over the quote from Axon. A committee was formed a year ago to study the potential body and fleet camera products. According to Lieutenant Schneider, there are three important

components to the body camera system; the cameras, the required infrastructure (internet connection, external wifi access point, workstation and mobile data terminals, etc.), and the personnel for system management. He is currently at a cost of \$464,186, down from the initial quote of \$610,000. This is a five-year term. This allows the Police Department to get forty-five body camera units and thirteen in car cameras. The Department needs both to meet the police accountability bill requirements. He further explained the payment plan and noted that every two and a half years the body cameras will be replaced and every five years the fleet cameras will be replaced. The cameras have a lifetime warranty. This agreement allows access to the interface, it can also redact and share video footage with the courts, etc. At the completion of five years, the Department can reenroll and Axon estimates there will be three-five percent increase in cost.

Lieutenant Schneider shared how the footage offloads from the cameras. The footage will offload to the cloud then the Department will have access through Axon's interface. The cameras for the cruisers have LPR readers built into them, therefore, it is no longer necessary to replace the Department's existing, outdated LPR reader. If the Department signs on with Axon prior to March 31, it will save just over \$40,000. Lieutenant Schneider noted that, if the Department were to sign a contract before the beginning of the fiscal year, a non-appropriation clause has been added. In case funds do not become available, the Department would be able to void this agreement. There is no guarantee that those savings will be available to the Department after the March 31 deadline.

According to Lieutenant Schneider, some of the Department's existing infrastructure is not adequate to run this new system. It will require the Windows 10 operating system. He further discussed the costs of updating the equipment. Lieutenant Schneider stated that the contract has been reviewed by the town attorney who offered minimal changes. Lieutenant Schneider noted that it is really important to have the performance license, he further explained how it is important that the cameras are running according to the Department's policy. The redaction software is helpful in incidents with juveniles and when multiple cameras have captured footage of an event. The redaction process can be very time consuming, however, it can be done quickly and efficiently using AI technology. Over time there is a cost savings with purchasing that technology. Lieutenant Schneider noted that he took out the signal sidearms kit, which they felt creates a false sense of security. Auto tagging is not necessary since the Department's RMS system does not currently support it. Each officer is responsible for downloading their camera and events are pre-tagged while the officer is still in the cruiser. Officers only have to put the camera in a docking station which uploads the footage to the cloud and also charges the camera.

Vice Chairman Tabor asked if Axon has performed as well as their reputation to which Lieutenant Schneider has received feedback from three other departments and all reviews have been positive. He also has not heard any issues with cloud-based storage. Chief Stewart noted that the cloud-based storage saves the IT Department a lot of work in regard to maintaining the server. Commissioner Bates thanked Lieutenant Schneider on his incredible leg work and noted that he has expressed it very clearly for the Police Commissioners.

Commissioner Bates made a motion to request a bid waiver for Axon and to authorize the Chief to enter into an agreement with Axon before the deadline to be able to save the eight percent (\$40,000). Seconded by Commissioner Tabor. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Chief Stewart noted that he will recommend a special meeting in order to conduct interviews to hire another officer. Captain Olson stated that there are three additional lateral hires and there are

seventeen people signed up for the agility test scheduled March 20th at 10 am. Chief Stewart commented that the conditional officer's background is almost complete and that the Police Commission needs to interview the three laterals. Chief Stewart suspects they will be conducting the recruit level interviews at the March meeting. They will have a special meeting for the laterals. The conditional officer should be onboard mid-April. Vice Chairman Tabor suggested the Police Commissioners attend the agility testing if possible. Commissioner Bates stated that she would be grateful if the Police Commissioners agree to conduct the interviews on a separate day instead of at the regular meeting. The Police Commissioners agreed to schedule the interviews separately.

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

8. Consent Agenda

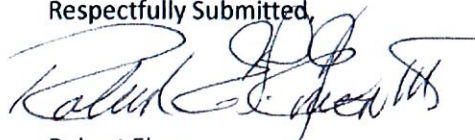
- a. Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center Newsletter**
- b. Memo Re: Support for I.T. Position in 21/2022 FY**
- c. Letter Re: North Stonington Animal Control Officer Deshy**
- d. E-Mail Re: Power Letter**
- e. Memo Re: Support for Community Outreach Specialist**
- f. Letter Re: Thank You – Stuff-A-Cruiser**

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

9. Adjourn

At 6:30 p.m., Vice Chairman Tabor made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Bates all in favor, motion approved. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Robert Elmer
Secretary