

**STONINGTON BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING**

**Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 5:00 P.M.**

**VIRTUAL WEBEX MEETING**

**Dial: 1-408-418-9388**

**Enter Access Code: 179 069 9006**

**-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.

**2. Remarks of the Public**

None.

**3. New Business**

**a. Veterans Memorial at Police Department**

Chief Stewart commented that the VFW in Pawcatuck and First Selectwoman Chesebrough have been searching for a home for the new Veterans Memorial. They located a spot between the walkway and side parking lot at the Police Department as a potential place for the memorial. Chief Stewart explained that they may present this location to the Police Commission at some point. The area is currently marked out for the location of the memorial which they intend to be four foot high and engraved with names. The memorial will be crafted by Buzzi Memorial. Chief Stewart informed the Police Commissioners that this project is at the beginning stages.

Vice Chairman Tabor commented in regard to an interactive memorial that he visited in Indianapolis that has ties to a Stonington High School science teacher.

**b. Revised Mental Health Policy**

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commission that the Police Academy came out with the guidelines in regard to the Mental Health Wellness Checks in accordance with Public Act Number 20-1. He suggests tabling this item until next month's meeting giving time for the Police Commissioners to review. Chief Stewart will further discuss this item in the budget discussion as part of the Report of the Chief.

Commissioner Elmer made a motion to table this item to next month's meeting. Motion seconded by Vice Chairman Tabor. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

**c. Stuff a Cruiser December 12, 2020**

Chief Stewart announced that the Stuff a Cruiser event will be held this coming Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup> from 10 am – 3 pm. Chief Stewart noted that this is a popular event for the Department and Human Services. This year, they will be using the Police Community room to sort and organize the donations. The event will be a little different than previous years. People will drive through and stay in their cars to drop off unwrapped gifts. Area Fire Departments will be conducting roaming parades on this date as well. Chief Stewart noted that hopefully the weather will cooperate.

**4. Old Business**

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

Richard LaSaracina, Radio Consultant

Mr. LaSaracina was introduced and a brief history was given to newly appointed Commissioner Bates about the projects Mr. LaSaracina has completed and the progress that has been made at the Police Department. Mr. LaSaracina began with the video camera update and discussed the new camera installation in the Police Department. There are thirty interior cameras and two new exterior cameras and three other exterior cameras. All cameras record both video and audio. All the cells will have audio maintained for two years on the server and six to eight months on the cameras themselves. The cell cameras use Dynamic Zooming which zooms up to twenty-five times. The exterior cameras use starlight technology, so in pitch black, the video footage appears to be like it is dusk. Mr. LaSaracina noted that the video management server was purchased two years ago. The server has been sent to the manufacturer to update the software and licensing. There has been a bit of a delay due to Covid-19. According to Mr. LaSaracina, January 1<sup>st</sup> looks to be the arrival date for the server. He further noted that the work stations that have access are directly connected to the network. It is extremely simple to use. There is a one-time camera and server licensing. If a camera fails, the license carries on with the server. Chairman O'Shaughnessy asked if the DUI footage will also be stored since it is necessary to keep that footage for two years? Mr. LaSaracina stated that all footage, the sallyport, the booking area and the cells are stored for twenty-four months. This system does not require a special hard drive. Chairman O'Shaughnessy asked when will this be complete? Mr. LaSaracina stated he is waiting for the server to be delivered and that everything else has been installed. They did have some problems with accessing the wiring in the cells but that has all worked out.

Mr. LaSaracina gave the two-way radio update. Behind the scenes, Mr. LaSaracina maintains the FCC licenses which includes police, fire and public works. He has modified a few.

Mr. LaSaracina commented on the State Police Hotline Migration. He noted that Region 2 operates on a low band channel and is migrating to the Trunking Based PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point). He further stated that it will be approximately six to eight months for the migration to be complete for Stonington (Region 4). Mr. LaSaracina informed the Police Commission that RI interfacing has stalled during the pandemic as RI has limited resources to pursue this effort. The proposed State ASR site, which is an auxiliary radio site that helps fill in the coverage gaps. According to Mr. LaSaracina, there is a noticeable gap at the Route 2 and Route 49 exchange for the portables. They have been unable to find a suitable site and will be meeting again with the State.

According to Mr. LaSaracina, each radio has a template with all the radio channels and are currently in version 8.28. Version 8.3 came out, however, Mr. LaSaracina opted not to load it into our radios, which, according to Mr. LaSaracina was a good decision since version 8.3 has some issues. Version 8.32 will be coming out soon and Mr. LaSaracina will update the portables and mobiles to version 8.32. Since the last

time the radios were programmed, Groton City and Ledyard have come on board. Chairman O'Shaughnessy stated that Norwich has also come online to which Mr. LaSarcina stated that Norwich will be added along with a few other channels. There was some discussion on operating the radios. Mr. LaSarcina stated that it looks like version 8.32 will be out in about six weeks.

Currently, the cruisers have the VM9000 dual band which allows the use of VHF as well as the new system. That particular radio will no longer be made. The replacement would be the new model VM7000 multideck radio. The VM7000 multideck radio is larger so they will need to allocate more space in the cars for them. Chairman O'Shaughnessy questioned the costs? Mr. LaSarcina answered that they are about the same price, however, more room is needed under the seats for the VM7000. Mr. LaSarcina suggests converting the local government channel to the trunk system and further recommends starting to budget to replace all the Town VHF Local Government radios with the Trunk System. Purchasing would be done through the State with grant opportunities, according to Mr. LaSarcina.

Mr. LaSarcina discussed the geographical location of Stonington and how it relates to the fiberoptic network which terminates at the state line. The fiberoptic network is reliable but if there is a fiberoptic failure, it will cause Stonington Police to operate independent of the State network. The solution is to add a site at Wintechog Hill in N. Stonington to connect to Stonington Police Headquarters' tower. He further discussed the wireless microwave network. Mr. LaSarcina warned that the State will ask Stonington to pay for some of this expense, however, he noted that Stonington is not obligated to purchase any infrastructure.

Mr. LaSarcina commented on the public safety systems and noted that the Fire Departments and EMS run on the VHF system. He informed the Police Commission that there is damage to the VHF antenna at the Taugwonk Rd tower site. Mr. LaSarcina briefly discussed the voter receiver site at Eagle Park which owned by the Mashantucket's and leased from them by General Dynamics. If he needs to access this site, General Dynamics needs to be informed.

Mr. LaSarcina informed the Police Commission that FirstNet is having a Virtual Outreach Summit this coming Thursday. He commented that this helps in understanding that there is more we can do with less.

Vice Chairman Tabor questioned why the trend for Johnson to go with a larger radio unit? Mr. LaSarcina answered that it only effects the mobiles, not the portables and the main reason they are switching is purely based on economics.

Chief Stewart commented that, as we move forward, we need a priority list, and, in regard to the Fire Departments, we need to replace some radios and move away from VHF. Mr. LaSarcina will come up with options for the repair at the Taugwonk site, which is a good, central location in this jurisdiction. Mr. LaSarcina noted that it is essential to spend money on new technology, not repairing the old VHF technology. It was assumed that the antenna fix will be approximately \$5,000. Commissioner Bates asked why the Department is obligated to maintain this outdated VHF system? Chief Stewart remarked that there are some concerns that the fire departments have with switching to the new system. He further remarked that the Department still dispatches for Quiamabaug, so they need to maintain the system from a public safety point of view. He discussed why it is necessary to, at least for now, maintain both systems. Commissioner Bates noted that it sounds like we would benefit with a strategic plan with partners to move forward and away from the old system. Chairman O'Shaughnessy responded that the

Chief has had conversations with all the fire departments. There are different governmental agencies involved and they all have their own visions and ideas on their radio systems. Chief Stewart gave a brief discussion on how the radio system has helped other agencies, that this has been a huge project and that Stonington is about 75% of where they want to be in regard to the complete system. Chief Stewart explained some of the reasons why the Fire Departments do not want to move to the new system, for example the noise cancellation features. Mr. LaSaracina stated that the best move is to provide them with the best infrastructure that they can for them to be able to use their current systems. The objective is to come up with a proposal for a long-term strategic plan to make sure the Town of Stonington is never at a liability for the fire or police service and that it is affordable. Every dollar spent should be for new technology.

Mr. LaSaracina will report back to the Police Commission with options, the advantages and disadvantages as well as costs. Chairman O'Shaughnessy recommended putting this on the agenda for January.

Commissioner Elmer questioned who is responsible for applying for the grant? According to Mr. LaSaracina, the town would apply to the State and the Department has to identify the need, the equipment cost and the projected lifespan.

#### **5. Traffic / Boating**

##### **a. E-Mail Re: Invitation to Participate in Project to install Centerline Rumble Strips of Municipally Owned Roadways**

Chief Stewart stated that this mostly applies to the State roads in town, however, N. Main St and Montauk Ave. have already been done. Other roads in town do not meet the necessary criteria. Commissioner Tabor made an observation that it seems rumble strip installations are less maintenance when done with new road installation and not as a retrofit.

No action.

##### **b. E-Mail Re: Suggestions for Downtown Mystic**

This item stems from a letter from Mr. Larkin in regard to a fifteen-minute parking zone on the corner of Haley St. at Cottrell St. When Cottrell St. was redesigned, the fifteen-minute parking spot in front of Mystic Salad Company was removed. The area where Mr. Larkin is proposing is not conducive for a parking space due to the space needed for an adequate turn radius for emergency vehicles and also no parking within twenty-five feet from an intersection. Chief Stewart stated that he is opposed to putting the fifteen-minute space back in.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy recommends Chief Stewart send Mr. Larkin a letter informing him of what was discussed.

##### **c. E-Mail Re: Mystic Parking Management Plan Meeting**

Chairman O'Shaughnessy highlighted the following two items from the Groton/Stonington Parking Committee meeting: first, commercial core areas should be reserved for short-term customer and visitor parking to the extent possible, and second, private parking facilities should be viewed as potential public parking assets. They are presently looking at private lots to see if they can be used for parking. Public Works is looking into fixing the water issue in the lot at the old voting hall. The Acme Wire lot is being looked into; however, it needs to be paved. They are also looking into utilizing the church parking lots.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy will get back to the Police Commission with information from this committee as it develops.

**d. E-Mail Re: Coogan Boulevard Wayfaring Signage – Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center**

Davnet Schaffer, Executive Director, Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center

Cassandra Meyer-Ogren, Director of Marketing and Communications, Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center

According to Ms. Schaffer, they are requesting wayfaring signs on the attraction signs on Coogan Blvd. for the Nature Center. Ms. Schaffer will help provide the funding to get their name on the signs. Chief Stewart commented that, for the past two years, a board member from the Denison Homestead has been at the Police Commission meetings in regard to the signage. It was decided when doing the wayfaring signs to group all the signs under the title "Denison Campus". Chief Stewart is willing to work out what needs to be done. Ms. Schaffer commented that the Nature Center was misrepresented and she is hoping to remedy this to get the Nature Center up on the signs as well. There was some discussion on the signage that was previously proposed. Ms. Schaffer is looking to add a sign reading "Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center". Commissioner Bates asked, if there is a regulation on size, the only question is what goes on the sign? Ms. Schaffer's goal is to have "Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center" in addition to the current "Denison Campus" sign on the attraction sign and remove any extraneous signs. Chief Stewart noted that there may be a limit to how many signs can be placed on the attractions sign.

Vice Chairman Tabor asked Ms. Schaffer if the Police Commission can get some continuity from the groups involved and present one final offering as to what the Police Commission needs to vote on. Ms. Schaffer noted that the Board of Trustees was not aware of what Mr. Brown agreed to in regard to the wording on the signs. She further stated that both organizations need separate billing. Ms. Schaffer will clarify so the Police Commission can get a visual of the size and wording and be able to vote on this in January. Chief Stewart reminded that they need to see if there is enough room on the existing attractions sign to add another sign.

Tabled until January.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy informed the Police Commission that a letter was received by a resident in regard to speeding on Mary Hall Rd. This item was not on the agenda, however, Chairman O'Shaughnessy suggested reaching out to Ms. Alston. Chief Stewart commented that he is familiar with the area. The population has increased in the area, therefore, creating more traffic. People in a hurry cause issues. Chief Stewart informed the Police Commission that the police have been down in the area and that a traffic study was done on Mechanic Street but it was found that speeds in the area were not too high. Chairman O'Shaughnessy commented that the streets are narrow. Commissioner Turner asked if the speed signs belong to the department or if they are the States? Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that they are the departments signs and there are a total of four signs. Chief Stewart commented that they are labor intensive to put them up. Chief Stewart further commented that they have "Drive Like Your Kids Live Here" signs on Mary Hall. The main area of concern is a straightaway.

**6. Approval of Minutes from Thursday, November, 12 2020 Regular Meeting \*VOTE NEEDED\***

Commissioner Elmer made a motion to approve the minutes for the Thursday, November 12, 2020 Regular Meeting as presented. Motion seconded by Commissioner Bates. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

**7. Report of the Chief of Police**

**a. Budget Report**

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commission that they are 40.4% of the way through the budget and have used 41.3%. He noted that the overtime line item is the only line that is over.

**b. Monthly Statistics**

Chief Stewart commented that numbers are lower due to Covid-19 which is not surprising.

**c. Alarm Report**

**d. Special Event Schedule**

**e. Letters Re: POSTC Use of Force Eligibility Requirements**

This is an FYI for the Police Commissioners. It is for grant eligibility requirements.

**f. Crosswalk Permit Renewal Application**

This is also an FYI for the Police Commissioners. A permit is needed from the State to put pedestrian safety signs in the crosswalks on a state highway. The crosswalk at West Broad Street School, which is now St. Michael's School, one at the crosswalk at Mel's Creamery, Downtown Pawcatuck, and one at the crosswalk in front of the old St. Michael's School.

**g. Budget Commentary**

According to Chief Stewart, this was included in the Police Commission packets.

**h. 2021-2022 Departmental Request Budget \*VOTE NEEDED\***

Chief Stewart gave a brief overview of the proposed budget request.

According to Chief Stewart, union personnel are already under contract with a 2.6% cost of living increase. Chief Stewart recommends the Police Commission approves the same for the non-union personnel.

Vice Chairman Tabor made a motion to accept the 2.6% cost of living increase for non-union members on the department. Motion seconded by Commissioner Bates. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Chief Stewart noted the Department will be requesting to create a new civilian position, a Police Support Supervisor. In addition to the new civilian position, Chief Stewart has had requests to add another sergeant for a total of seven sergeants. There is a growing need for supervisors to be available to respond to calls. The number of responsibilities for each sergeant has been increasing. Also, the relief schedule is very taxing. Adding another sergeant will give the opportunity to have two supervisors so that there is overlap on each shift which will make the sergeants happier and more productive. Chief Stewart discussed the variety of duties that is required of the sergeants beyond running the shift. Chief Stewart recommends adding a seventh sergeant, which is an increase of \$9,000 to the budget, and lower

the number of patrol officers from twenty-nine to twenty-eight. Chief Stewart further discussed some of the duties of the sergeants and noted that other duties will need to be added as required by law. Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that paperwork has increased for both the officers and the sergeants, for example, accident reports used to be one page reports and now they are eight or more pages long. Commissioner Bates commented that Chief Stewart has made a very good case for adding a sergeant.

Chief Stewart included the draft of the job description for the new civilian position, Police Support Supervisor. Vice Chairman Tabor asked about the new position, if the new hire will be a supervisor for the existing dispatch staff to which Chief Stewart responded yes, both records and dispatch staff. This person will also oversee the technology in the dispatch center. He needs approval from the Police Commission then the Board of Finance to make this happen. Chief Stewart used Groton Town's job description and expanded some of the duties since Stonington is a bit smaller than Groton Town. He commented that the Department has grown and will have to continue to grow as the population grows. Chief Stewart also noted that, once the pandemic is over, they will see the special event schedule expand so there will be even more need to grow as a department.

Chief Stewart has requested to increase the amount in the radio maintenance line item to \$1000.

Chief Stewart remarked that the retirement fund is to be determined by the Director of Finance.

Chief Stewart discussed that he has requested to increase the amount in the officer physicals line item from \$6,000 to \$18,000, which he feels is a reasonable starting point. He further discussed that they will be required to have 20% of the Department complete mental health evaluations through psychiatrists with PTSD backgrounds and who are licensed by the State of Connecticut and, at this time, telehealth is not something the Academy has considered. Commissioner Bates commented that she would love to have a conversation with the Chief to see if they can address the telehealth concept. Commissioner Bates further commented that the State is under resourced with regard to psychiatric and psychological experts. Chief Stewart remarked that a third of the Department has to complete drug testing for drugs and steroids.

According to Chief Stewart, they have locked into \$1.65 per gallon for gasoline for the year.

Chief Stewart added \$15k for accreditation expenses to start out with at this time.

Chief Stewart indicated that the Department asks for what they need and hopefully they get those items. The biggest increase in this budget is for personnel.

Commissioner Bates made a motion to approve the current draft of the budget as presented by the Chief and to forward it to the Board of Finance once all the numbers are filled in. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

#### **I. "211" Discussion**

Chief Stewart had a discussion with Commissioner Bates and 211. Commissioner Bates explained that they had a terrific discussion about how to work together and encourage non-emergency calls to go to 211, cross training staff from 211 and the police and to perhaps pilot a closer cooperation. Commissioner Bates stated that a Senator in Pennsylvania introduced in Congress a bill for the redirection of 911 calls to the 211 system when applicable. Chief Stewart and Commissioner Bates agreed that they will look for no cost ways starting in Stonington to increase the coordination of services.

Chief Stewart addressed his idea, PARS. P stands for paradigm shift. It will be a paradigm shift away from calling 911 whenever any kind of help is needed. Chief Stewart stated that not every call for help requires an officer. A is for accessibility. It is necessary to make the services of 211 accessible to those in need of assistance. R is for response time for the services. S is for safety, the safety of the callers and the safety of responders. Chief Stewart remarked that this will be an interesting paradigm shift. According to Chief Stewart, at the end of the day, it is important to determine what are the best services for people in need. This will be a collaborative approach. Vice Chairman Tabor asked where is the switch point, for example, if a person places a 911 call into dispatch, do dispatchers determine the need for police or refer the caller to 211 or does it go both ways? Chief Stewart stated that it is easier for the caller to first call 211 and then for 211 to determine if this is a police call since a 911 dispatcher is going to send an officer to any emergency. There is a need to educate and get the public to shift their response to situations by calling 211 if more applicable than calling 911. Chief Stewart commented that the police are a short-term crisis intervention agency and social workers are more long-term intervention. Chief Stewart had a robust conversation on how this could work, and noted that this is about getting the best help for those in need. Commissioner Bates noted that it is very complicated to work out if a 911 call should be a 211 call and the police need to have the opportunity to shorten their time at a call and provide the right service and be able to engage 211 in a call. Vice Chairman Tabor noted that this provides the police officers a lateral to pass along incidents to those with a different skill set. He further commented on the closure of the mental health institutions years ago and that the police have since become the last resort in those instances.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy asked Commissioner Bates if someone calls 211 with a mental health issue how is that call currently handled? Commissioner Bates answered that it depends. If it becomes clear that a caller needs urgent mental health services, they have teams available 24/7 that are trained to help people during a crisis and, if it is determined it is necessary, the specialist calls the police. According to Commissioner Bates, ideally the hope is to create an understanding of when to call 211 as your first call.

Ideally, Commissioner Bates noted that this will help create a new understanding of when to call 211 instead of 911.

#### **J. Police Vehicles – Electric**

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commission that he went down this road a couple years ago. He is not sure how electric vehicles will stand up in the policing world. Chief Stewart does not want to be the test case on electric vehicles. Most of the Department's cars run on the road 24/7. Chief Stewart noted that electric cars need to be charged and that prices of these vehicles will also have to decrease, among other concerns.

#### **k. Training**

Chief Stewart commented that they had bias training two weeks ago. He priced out that it would be \$50 per person for the entire department to take this particular training.

#### **I. Stonington Police Human Trafficking Report**

FYI.

**m. Memo Re: Officer Chris Murray Departure**

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commission that he received the resignation of Officer Christopher Murray. He has decided to pursue a different career and Chief Stewart wishes him good health and the best of luck on his new endeavor.

Commissioner Bates made a motion to accept Officer Christopher Murray's resignation. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

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.

No Shave November has been extended until January.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted there was one use of force report from November 28<sup>th</sup> where the subject refused to stop his vehicle, then refused to show his hands, therefore the officer drew his weapon, the subject complied and the officer holstered his weapon. There were no issues with this use of force.

**8. Consent Agenda**

**a. Letter Re: Thank You – Indulge Coffee & Sandwich Co.**


**b. Letter Re: Thank You - Trisha Nilsen**

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

**9. Adjourn**

At 7:34 p.m., Commissioner Bates made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice Chairman Tabor all in favor, motion approved. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Robert Elmer  
Secretary