

**STONINGTON BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING**

**Thursday, October 8, 2020 at 5:00 P.M.**

**VIRTUAL WEBEX MEETING**

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

**Enter Access Code: 173 887 8797**

**-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 5:01 p.m.

**2. Remarks of the Public**

*Sarah Baker, Mystic*

Ms. Baker thanked the Board of Police Commissioners for continuing to navigate meetings via Webex and these online channels and forums. Ms. Baker continued that she would love to hear an update from Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy regarding conversations that he has been having with the community.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy commented that he has had a number of conversations with business, religious and political leaders regarding their concerns and they all seemed positive in the remarks Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy made at the September meeting. Chairman Gourd asked if anyone has reached out to Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy following last month's meeting to which Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy stated that no one has reached out, however, he is still willing to sit down with anyone and asked that they reach out to Stonington Police Department or Administrative Assistant Mitchell to be put directly in touch with him.

**3. Remarks of Chief Stewart Regarding Chairman Gourd's Last Meeting**

Chief Stewart announced that this is Chairman Gourd's last regularly scheduled meeting as Chairman of the Board of Police Commissioners. He noted that five years goes by very quickly. Chief Stewart explained that one of the main responsibilities of the Board of Police Commissioners is hiring officers. During Chairman Gourd's tenure, the Department has hired nine officers, promoted one Sergeant, hired a full time Animal Control Officer and numerous Community Service Officers (CSO's) and School Crossing Guards. Chief Stewart recalled that Chairman Gourd was a staunch supporter of the radio system upgrades and transitioning to the State radio system as well as updating the dispatch center. There have been major renovations made to the building, for example the a/c and heating units, phone systems, and

video recording systems. Chairman Gourd has handled countless traffic issues including the Cottrell Street area, as well as a variety of Planning and Zoning matters. Chairman Gourd has always been available and has been an integral part of making the wheels of this organization move. Chief Stewart thanked Chairman Gourd and presented him with plaque.

Chairman Gourd stated that he appreciates the Captain and Chief's council, especially over the last six to eight months and noted that their leadership is a great service to the Town. He mentioned the improved quality and reliability of the radio system and its coverage was obtained at a much lower cost than neighboring towns and, due to their foresight and planning, they were able to fund this through regular appropriations and not have to put out a special bond. Chairman Gourd commended the Chief and Captain's professionalism for engaging a third party to evaluate a recent incident to look into how the Department responded. To Chairman Gourd, this says that they have the best interest of the Department at heart and he applauds them for their professionalism. The thing that Chairman Gourd is most proud of, notwithstanding all the negative press around the country in regard to the men and women in blue, is that Stonington Police Department still has an excellent reputation and the Board of Police Commissioners continually receive letters of appreciation for the professionalism in the manner the officers conduct themselves and relate to the public. Chairman Gourd thanked Chief Stewart, Captain Olson and the Department.

#### **4. New Business**

##### **a. 2021 Regular Meeting Schedule \*APPROVAL NEEDED\***

Commissioner Elmer made a motion to approve the Board of Police Commissioners Regular Meeting Schedule for 2021 as submitted. Motion seconded by Commissioner Tabor. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

##### **b. Planning & Zoning Text & Map Amendment Application: D'Amato Investments, LLC – Taugwonk Road, Stonington \*COMMENTS NEEDED\***

Chief Stewart does not think that this amended application will impact traffic, parking, or safety. It is an expansion of the permitted uses in the industrial park to now include personal services.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy 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. Motion seconded by Commissioner Tabor. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

##### **c. Washington Street & Willow Street Parking \*POSSIBLE ACTION ITEM\***

June Strunk, Town of Stonington Selectwoman

According to Selectwoman Strunk, the area on Willow Street, in between Washington Street and E. Main Street, is really tight and she suggests possibly making it one way in that area as long as all the neighbors are engaged in the decision. She further noted that parking on Washington Street, in the new one-way area, is causing issues for pedestrians.

Commissioner Tabor informed the Police Commissioners that he received a letter this afternoon from people residing and/or owning property in that area. The letter reflects what an individual commented on at last month's meeting. Chairman Gourd proposed to include the letter on next month's meeting agenda. Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy and the other Commissioners agreed that they need time to review the letter.

**d. E-Mail Re: Parking Issues Around Clydes Cider Mill \*POSSIBLE ACTION ITEM\***

Diana Lurie Boersma, 98 N. Stonington Rd., Mystic

Ms. Boersma informed the Police Commissioners that the uses of the cider mill have greatly increased. On weekends, people have been parking on the road, fully blocking a lane of travel and pedestrians are also walking in the road. This restricts the two-lane traffic flow. Ms. Boersma further noted that the fire station is right down the road and these parking issues may restrict the accessibility of fire equipment. Sometimes, Ms. Boersma has trouble exiting her driveway and requires help. Other neighbors have had their lawns damaged and mailboxes blocked by vehicles. She suggested conducting a traffic study to see how the cider mill's customers can be better accommodated.

Chairman Gourd noted that a number of the Commissioners have been up there and have seen the restrictions on the traffic flow. Chairman Gourd noted that he spoke with the cider mill owner today to discuss the parking issues and he explained to the owner that the Police Commissioners have no interest in trying to shut the business down. The Commissioners all support small business but they have to balance that with public safety, emergency vehicle access, pedestrian safety, etc. The owner agreed to post additional temporary signs instructing those parking on the side of the road to have all four tires off the pavement. Chairman Gourd suggests seeing how the additional signs work out for the remainder of the season and hopefully reach a medium that works for all. Ms. Boersma noted that this does not address the ability for her to exit her driveway. Chairman Gourd asked if temporary signs near her driveway would be beneficial to which Ms. Boersma stated it would be helpful. Chairman Gourd suggested that Captain Olson go out to her residence to address the issue.

**e. Request for "No Parking" Signs – North Stonington Road \*ACTION ITEM\***

See Above.

**f. E-Mail Re: Request for Historic Town Dock Signage \*POSSIBLE ACTION ITEM\***

Michael Grimshaw, President, Southern New England Fisherman's and Lobstermen's Association & Member of the Town of Stonington Waterfront Commission

Mr. Grimshaw informed the Police Commission that it would be nice to have the dock recognized as a historical point and tourist attraction. He further stated that it will attract business to the local vendors in town. He has reached out to the State numerous times, however, no one has responded to him. Mr. Grimshaw noted that he has support from Sandy Grimes, Chair of the Stonington Waterfront Commission, for this signage.

Chairman Gourd stated that the main function of the Police Commission is for traffic, parking and safety. Chief Stewart noted that area attractions signs are set by the Department of Economic Development and that Susan Cullen, Director of Economic and Community Development for the Town of Stonington, would be the contact person to get this started. Chief Stewart explained how the signs are set and indicated that it is a bit of a process. Mr. Grimshaw stated that he spoke with Director Cullen and received the contact number to the State. Chief Stewart will work on getting the correct contact for Mr. Grimshaw at the State level. Mr. Grimshaw reiterated the importance of recognizing the Town Dock as one of the last fishing ports in Southern New England.

Chairman Gourd thanked Mr. Grimshaw and noted that he appreciates all that the fishermen and lobstermen do for the community.

**g. Letter Re: Request for Stop Signs – Cutler Street @ North Main Street \*POSSIBLE ACTION ITEM\***

Jim Heetmann, 76 Cutler St., Stonington, CT

Mr. Heetmann sent in a detailed letter to the Police Commissioners. He is hoping to get approval for stop signs at the Cutler Street and North Main Street intersection for a variety of safety reasons.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that he has been down in the area and has seen the issues. He does not have a problem with adding a stop sign on Cutler Street at North Main Street. Commissioner Tabor stated that he is well familiar with the area and he asked what would be Chief Stewart's advice? Chief Stewart noted that there have been no accidents at that intersection in many years. There are issues at the North Water Street and Trumbull Street intersection as well. Chief Stewart is perplexed by this sign request and asked what was the tipping point for Mr. Heetmann to bring his concerns to the Police Commission? Mr. Heetmann stated that it was an issue he noticed right away when he moved in five years ago but he only got around to writing the letter recently. He has witnessed a lot of driver confusion and his main concerns are with safety. Chief Stewart suggests putting "Crossing Traffic Does Not Stop" signs on the existing stop signs. Chief Stewart stated that the bigger concern is on the State road that intersects with Cutler Street. Chief Stewart briefly spoke to those issues and commented on the negatives to adding stop signs. He suggested to check with neighbors to see if the addition of a stop sign at Cutler Street and North Water Street would help alleviate the issue Mr. Heetmann is addressing. Chief Stewart is not in favor of adding stop signs at all these intersections. Mr. Heetmann acknowledged that adding "Crossing Traffic Does Not Stop" signs on the existing stop signs is an improvement.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy commented that if they add a stop sign on Cutler Street, they will lose some on street parking since there would be no parking twenty-five feet from a stop sign. He thinks adding oncoming traffic does not stop signage is a good idea. Commissioner Tabor also agreed with Chief Stewart's suggestion and noted that the Police Commission can always revisit this issue and that it is a step forward in improving the situation. Commissioner Elmer and Commission Turn both agree with Chief Stewart's recommendations.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy made a motion to install signs on the North Main Street stop signs to the effect that crossing traffic does not stop, both north and south bound. Motion seconded by Commissioner Tabor. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

**5. Old Business**

**a. Old Broadway Sonoco Building Proposal \*POSSIBLE ACTION\* (May be Presented Next Month)**

Mark Comeau, Project Architect

Sarah Britner, Cherenzia & Associates LTD

Mr. Comeau informed the Police Commissioner's that the previous proposal and site plan has not changed but the building use has changed from a restaurant to a boutique, six room hotel. The site circulation remains the same with the exception that now all parking will be contained within the site. Mr. Comeau further stated that there will not be outdoor music.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy questioned if the pool area will only be for hotel guests to which Mr. Comeau stated that yes it will be for guests only. Commissioner Tabor asked if nothing changed from last month with regard to the ability to hook into the sewer to which Mr. Comeau replied that Commissioner Tabor was correct. Commissioner Tabor questioned if construction staging and materials will be kept onsite to which Mr. Comeau stated yes. Mr. Comeau confirmed for Commissioner Tabor that this is an

LS-5 zone. Commissioner Tabor briefly discussed the permitted uses of a LS-5 zones and commented that Mr. Comeau is requesting a special use for this zone, therefore, Commissioner Tabor asked if there is any anticipation that this facility will allow for extended stays or be used as apartments? He further commented that he is asking this question since it relates to parking. Mr. Comeau stated that there are no plans for long term stays

Chairman Gourd asked, will the available parking satisfy both guests and employees to which Mr. Comeau stated yes and that he believes there are fifteen parking spaces on site. The hotel will have virtual check-in with one employee on site. Ms. Britner described the locations of the fifteen spaces on site and also confirmed that this includes handicap space. Chief Stewart asked if they have reached out to State DOT to confirm that the State is on board with the plan to which Ms. Britner stated that they have submitted plans to State DOT and also have a traffic engineer reviewing the plans.

Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy 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. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer. Discussion: Chief Stewart appreciated the owner, Mr. Cherenzia and the team for meeting to resolve the issues presented at the last Police Commission meeting. No further discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

## **6. Traffic / Boating**

### **a. Route 1 & Route 2 Intersection Study by UCONN Students**

Chief Stewart noted that, the new Town Engineer Christopher Greenlaw, informed him that UCONN students will be looking at the Route 1 & Route 2 intersection. He further noted that reworking the intersection would be an extremely expensive endeavor. According to Chief Stewart, there are a good number of accidents there and he gave a brief history on the intersection. He commented that there has been no real solution so far.

### **b. E-Mail Re: Project 0172-0496 – Town Letter – Media Release**

This is an FYI from Chief Stewart. State DOT will be doing a pedestrian upgrade at the Route 27 and the Mystic Seaport South Driveway.

### **c. McGrath Court Letter**

Chief Stewart recommends tabling this item and he will send someone out to have a discussion with the neighbors and try to remediate the issue. Chairman Gourd noted that one neighbor owns a property that has frontage on both North Water Street and McGrath Ct. Chairman Gourd noted that the owner is possibly looking at making parking or a right-of-way into his property from McGrath (which is a Town owned road). He asked Chief Stewart if doing so requires permission for a "curb cut" to which Chief Stewart replied yes.

Tabled.

### **d. Denison Homestead Signs Update**

Chief Stewart met with the Highway Department in regard to Way Finding signs. He noted that the Police Commission has approved a number of signs. The State DOT requires clear signage up until the last intersection before an attraction. Chief Stewart commented that they have replaced the old stacking signs with "Denison Campus" signs on Jerry Browne Rd.

**7. Approval of Minutes from Thursday, September 10, 2020 Regular Meeting \*VOTE NEEDED\***

Chairman Gourd noted typos to pass along for correction.

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

**8. Report of the Chief of Police**

**a. Budget Report**

According to Chief Stewart, the overtime line item is currently 10% over. They are currently filling in for two open positions, however, the Sergeant swearing in will be soon.

**b. Monthly Statistics**

Chief Stewart commented that Westerly has also had numerous auto thefts and vehicles being entered and items being stolen from them. He noted that this month, there have been thirty-two attempted larcenies from vehicles and one stolen vehicle. Year to date there have been sixteen stolen vehicles from town. Chief Stewart stressed that it is extremely important to lock your vehicle. All the vehicles that have been entered have been unlocked.

**c. Alarm Report**

**d. Special Event Schedule**

**e. Letter Re: East Lyme Psychological Associates Revision of Fees**

FYI regarding fees for job applicants. Chief Stewart noted that the fees have increased significantly and this will have to be part of the operating budget moving forward. He further commented that now, under the Police Accountability Bill, twenty percent of the Department has to have a psychological exam done on a yearly basis with a licensed psychologist that has experience in PTSD. Chairman Gourd asked if there are any other firms around with those credentials? Chief Stewart stated that he will have to check. It will be a challenge to find qualified psychologists that fit the credentials in the Police Accountability Bill.

**f. Body Cam Deployment**

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commission that three body cameras have been deployed as a test run. Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that, as part of the subcommittee, they have had an opportunity to look at some of the videos. Chief Stewart thanked Roger Kizer for getting the cameras and the software up and running. He further thanked Lt. Schneider and the three volunteers.

**g. Use of Force**

Chief Stewart noted that this item will be on the Police Commission's agenda every month. Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy stated that the two use of force incidents that were reviewed were involving juveniles. He stated that there were no problems with use of force in those incidents and he further commented that the officers used great restraint in using a minimum amount of force.

**h. Boat Parade – State Radio Use**

Chief Stewart commented that every agency that helped during this boat parade was able to communicate on the State system. There were over one thousand boats. No injuries were reported and

there were no arrests. Chief Stewart applauded the State for coming down and helping during the parade.

**i. Results of Sergeant Exam**

Officer Theresa Hersh was selected to be promoted to Sergeant. Final scores were included in the Police Commissioner's packets.

**j. Gym**

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commissioners that the Director of Administrative Services suggested that, in response to COVID-19 protocols, the Department should not allow retired employees to come in and utilize the gym at this time. Chief Stewart recommends revisiting this in a year.

Tabled.

**k. Daigle Law**

Chief Stewart will put this on next month's agenda. It is in reference to the updates on policies and procedures.

**l. ACO**

Chief Stewart informed the Police Commissioner's that they need to fill the part time ACO position that has been vacant for approximately seven months. Chairman Gourd asked for a volunteer from the Commission to interview the three candidates. Commissioner Elmer volunteered.

**m. CIP Budget**

Captain Olson stated that, for the current year, the Department is looking at \$180K to replace vehicles and is working on pricing out an ACO vehicle before the current vehicle fails. Next year, they are still looking at \$180K for vehicle replacement to maintain the fleet, the MDT replacement at \$19k, IT Upgrade fund at \$20k, and the body and cruiser cameras at \$500k.

The implementation of body and cruiser cameras has been mandated by the State and will be partially funded with a possible 30% reimbursement from the State, if all goes well. The Department has been discussing body and cruiser cameras for the last few years; however, they are now required as part of the new Police Accountability Bill. Commissioner Tabor will continue to sit in on the meetings.

Commissioner Tabor asked if there have been any early, preliminary conversations with the Board of Finance in regard to the cost of the body and cruiser cameras? Captain Olson commented that the cameras are not a big-ticket item, it is the storage and operational costs. As soon as Captain Olson receives a more solid numbers, he will pass them on to the Board of Finance. They are looking at the best option and Captain Olson noted that most departments in the area are going with cloud storage, which is easier to share with other Departments and the court system. Chief Stewart has had some preliminary conversations with Mr. Frishman from the Board of Finance in regard to this item. Chief Stewart stated they are trying to ensure that they have support from neighboring Departments and are able to share and view videos between Departments. Chief Stewart commented that maybe it will be possible to work with other Departments to get a volume discount on equipment pricing. Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted the additional issues with the management of the data and additional personnel costs. Chief Stewart expects that a couple of things will need to be done before this is implemented.

Commissioner Tabor made a motion to approve the CIP Budget as presented. Motion seconded Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy. No discussion. All in favor, motion approved.

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

**9. Consent Agenda**

- a. Letter Re: Floatchella 2020
- b. Memo Re: Lt. Schneider 20 Year Anniversary
- c. Memo Re: Good Job – Officer Armstrong
- d. Memo Re: Job Well Done
- e. E-Mail Re: Pequotsepos @ Jerry Brown \*FYI\*
- f. E-Mail Re: Officer Hersh – Community Police Officer Recognition

Chief Stewart noted two incidents where officers did an outstanding job. One incident involved finding a missing person. The officers stayed on the case and eventually found the person alive. The other incident involved Officer Hersh. She was conducting house checks and found someone that had fallen. If the person had not been found by Officer Hersh and given the proper medical care, there would have been a different outcome. Chief Stewart commented that two lives are here today because of these officer's actions.

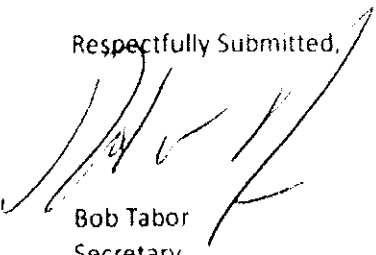
Chairman Gourd made a motion that the Board of Police Commissioner's send a letter to the involved officers in appreciation for their service. Motion seconded by Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy. All in favor, motion approved.

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

**10. Adjourn for Celebratory Socially Distanced Gathering of Commissioner Gourd's Service**

At 6:33 p.m., Commissioner Turner made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice Chairman O'Shaughnessy, all in favor, motion approved. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Bob Tabor  
Secretary