

**STONINGTON BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING**

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

VIRTUAL WEBEX MEETING

Dial: 1-408-418-9388

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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 & Captain Todd Olson

1. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

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

Chairman O'Shaughnessy remarked that, back in 1988, Police Commission Chairman Robert Simmons wrote a policy and procedure manual for the Board of Police Commissioners. This manual has not been updated or reviewed by legal counsel. They have referred the manual to Daigle Law firm for review and update. Chairman O'Shaughnessy will report back to the Police Commission with Daigle's recommendations for the manual.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that the Police Commission received a nice card from Chief Stewart and his wife. The Board of Police Commissioners sent a fruit basket due to Mrs. Stewart's mother's passing.

2. Remarks of the Public

None.

3. New Business

a. Request for Parking Spot Striping – Washington Street, Mystic *ACTION ITEM*

Dr. Falck, 35 Washington St., Mystic

Dr. Falck informed the Police Commission that his office is at 35 Washington St. and it would be beneficial for his patients to have clearly marked parking spaces along Washington St. in order to use the street parking more efficiently. Chairman O'Shaughnessy does not see an issue, however, he commented that they will need to go back to the company that marked Jackson Ave. and Willow St. to appropriately mark out the spaces. The actual striping can be done by the Department of Public Works at no cost, however, there may be a cost associated with delineating the spaces. The Police Commission will follow up on this request. It was noted that nothing can be done until the spring. Dr. Falck stated that he appreciated the Police Commissioners for addressing his concern.

4. Old Business

a. Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center Signage *POSSIBLE ACTION ITEM*

Davenet Schaffer, Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center

Ms. Schaffer noted that she spoke with the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center's Board and the Denison Homestead's Board and provided the agreed upon signage request to Chief Stewart. The Board of Police Commissioners were in receipt of the requested signage as well. Vice Chairman Tabor thanked Ms. Schaffer for following up with this item. He noted that the lettering in some of the examples provided could be more uniform. Commissioner Bates commented that these examples are just mockups. Chief Stewart confirmed that the Department of Public Works would be making them uniform in size.

Vice Chairman Tabor made a motion to approve the signage request as submitted by the Nature Center to the Police Commission and the Chief. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

b. Clyde's Cider Mill Parking * POSSIBLE ACTION ITEM*

Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that the parking on N. Stonington Road has been an ongoing issue that the Police Commission has been trying to mitigate for quite a while. He opened the meeting for those in attendance to address the Police Commission.

Betty Tylaska, Resident, N. Stonington Rd., Mystic, CT

Ms. Tylaska informed the Police Commission that she has lived across the street from Clyde's Cider Mill for sixty-one years. She stated that they have grown as a business and it has been a struggle to maintain the road as a peaceful, scenic road. In 1990, the N. Stonington Rd. residents including the Clyde's Cider Mill owner were successful in designating a portion of the road as a scenic road. The goal was to preserve and protect the rural qualities of this road. Ms. Tylaska gave a brief history of the road itself. She noted that times have changed. From September to late November the parking situation and traffic on N. Stonington Rd is horrendous. Clyde's Cider Mill has expanded from a business that presses apples and makes cider to one that sells various products, has live entertainment, tastings, and outside vendors. According to Ms. Tylaska, there is a huge increase in pedestrians and motor traffic. There are signs which eliminate parking on one side of the road creating a constant stream of cars looking for parking spaces. On weekends, there is a huge overflow of cars parking on the road. On October 10, 2020 at two p.m., she has counted as many as one hundred and thirty-eight cars parked alongside the road from the old school administration building north to Route 184. This was more than a half mile of cars parked along the road.

Ms. Tylaska suggested Clyde's Cider Mill offer a shuttle service with parking at the old school administration building and in the Fire Department's lot. She further suggested that maybe Clyde's Cider Mill could keep the pressing and demonstrations at the mill but move the sales venue elsewhere. Due to scenic road regulations, she does not feel that this road should be tampered with. To conclude, Ms. Tylaska loosely quoted Robert Frost to finalize her reasons for keeping N. Stonington Rd. peaceful and scenic.

Jane & Richard Burke, Residents, N. Stonington Rd., Mystic, CT

The Burke's live on N. Stonington Rd., closer to the former school administration building, for over forty years. They like to see that the Cider Mill is doing well. The Burke's anticipate that it will be busy during the Cider Mill's season and they try to avoid the area. They also noted that they do not see parking

issues during the week, only on weekends. Ms. Burke commented that the Cider Mill is an integral part of Old Mystic.

Diana Lurie Boersma, Resident, N. Stonington Rd., Mystic, CT

Ms. Boersma stated that she has only lived here for a few years. There is not much disruption during the week, however, it is very disruptive on weekends. The additional signage that was put out this past season has helped but issues were not completely alleviated. Ms. Boersma noted that it is difficult for emergency vehicles to pass and there are pedestrians in the roadway. It is also hard to keep two lanes of traffic flowing. She noted the usage of the Cider Mill has grown over the years and that they are selling products that are not produced at the mill. She further stated that the Cider Mill has added more picnic tables and music which encourages people to stay much longer which they do not have adequate parking to accommodate. The issues are usually only on the weekends, but it creates traffic hazards. Ms. Boersma is not sure that all the parts of Town Government are on the same page regarding these issues. She suggests that they all coordinate with each other. Ms. Boersma further suggested a shuttle as a possible solution or for the Cider Mill to consider going back to not having live music and other things encouraging people to stay longer. This would decrease the Cider Mill's need for parking and they would be able to take care of more of their own parking needs rather than requiring the neighborhood to deal with it.

Christina Morgan, Resident, N. Stonington Rd., Mystic, CT

Ms. Morgan informed the Police Commission that she loves the Cider Mill and the business but the Morgan's are truly concerned for the safety of pedestrians and the increased traffic on the road over the last few years. They have seen numerous near misses. The traffic and parking are significantly different than when they moved to the road twenty-two years ago. Some sort of management needs to be in place on the weekends and holidays due to the safety issues. She further noted that emergency vehicles also need to be able to get down the road.

Walter Woycik, Resident, N. Stonington Rd., Mystic, CT

Mr. Woycik noted that there is definitely an increase in traffic on the road. He further stated that a lot of the traffic this past season was due to Covid-19 since people had nowhere else to go. Mr. Woycik stated that it is what it is and he is used to it since he has lived there his whole life. He does not have an issue with the Cider Mill.

Harold & Annette Miner, Owners, Clyde's Cider Mill, N. Stonington Rd., Mystic, CT

Ms. Miner stated that this is before the Police Commission to address an old issue of parking. There is no land available for them to purchase to expand their parking. They know there is a parking issue. Clyde's Cider Mill has been in business for one hundred and forty years. Their family has been there since 1881. Ms. Miner stated that they have grown what they have and have not added anything new. They have been manufacturing hard cider on the site since 1881. They follow all the federal, state and town laws. The picnic tables are the same amount that they have always had and are not something that has been added. The Miner's are aware of the parking issues; however, they do not have a perfect solution. She noted that they were slammed right away at the beginning of the season due to Covid-19 with other events and activities cancelled. The Miner's tried a few years ago, at the suggestion of the Town, to shuttle visitors with a tractor or wagon, however, their insurance stated absolutely not. The Miner's also looked into a shuttle service but that was unavailable as an option at the time they looked into it. They have been throwing ideas around to alleviate the parking issues. They may be able to have their employees park in the school administration building lot to open up around ten spots. Ms. Miner

informed the Police Commission that the products that are sold outside are five small local entrepreneurs and their products are also sold inside the store. They encourage small business.

Ms. Miner stated that newer residents should have researched the area before they moved in. She is so blessed that her family has had the fortitude to make this business work. There are six generations of the family keeping the business alive. They have all made a conscious effort to pass along a successful business to the next generation. She further informed the Police Commission that they are the last steam powered cider mill in the United States and have been presented a plaque from the Smithsonian Institute and are on the National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmarks list. The Cider Mill will try to do the best they can with what they have. Ms. Miner stated that, to suggest that they should cut back on their business because, for two days a week, six to ten weekends a year makes for an uncomfortable situation for some in the neighborhood is not fair. They try to be good neighbors and they are open to hearing any suggestions on how to fix this issue. Their daughter suggested, for the season, to change the road to one way with parking only on one side of the road to alleviate some of the issues.

John Miner, Employee, Clyde's Cider Mill

Mr. Miner informed the Police Commission that none of the vendors are set up in parking spaces. They are set up in areas where parking is not possible. He further noted that some of the parking areas on the property is tricky and they try to keep their employees parked in that area. Mr. Miner noted that they are very aware of the parking issues. They encourage people to park on the property before parking on the road.

Ms. Boersma commented that the Cider Mill is a great historical location but they must also be mindful that it is located in a residential neighborhood. She further stated that as they grow, at some point they become a different kind of business, and that the Town, the Mill and the neighborhood need to work together to make sure it works for everyone.

Commissioner Turner commented that he is also a resident of N. Stonington Rd. and has seen firsthand how hard the Miner's work, however, the business's growth should not be to the detriment of the neighborhood. He noticed that there are safety issues and pedestrians are in the roadway. He stated that, as you grow there are certain things that have to be done and they need to work with the Town whether the solution be shuttles or changing the road to one-way. Commissioner Turner further commented that he does not think that it is fair to state to the residents living on N. Stonington Rd. that the business is growing and that is just the way it is. Commissioner Tuner stated that residents on N. Stonington Rd. are entitled to quiet enjoyment of their property. He suggests the dialog should continue and that there should be additional meetings between the residents and business owner to find a workable solution.

Commissioner Bates thanked the Miner's for the creative solution of possibly changing the road temporarily to one-way. She noted that, when we think about preserving what we love about this area, this only happens when we have an economy that allows us to do so. A number of little towns across New England have essentially died because they have no viable business. Commissioner Bates is very grateful for people like the Miners that have businesses that provide jobs and provide taxes that allow us to see Mystic and the North Stonington area maintained in such a beautiful way. This does mean that there is change and evolution which has to happen in order to preserve what we most love about this area. She hopes that this discussion will continue. Commissioner Bates then addressed Ms. Boersma's comments and stated that we do need to better communicate across town government. She further noted that the Economic Development Commission is part of this discussion as to what can and should

be done to honor the desires of neighbors to the greatest extent possible and also to be supportive to the businesses that are the life blood of our local economy.

Vice Chairman Tabor commented that there have been valid concerns presented. He also appreciates the Miner's efforts. He questioned about the vendors and asked where they park? Ms. Miner stated that two vendors are dropped off and do not park on the property and another sells out before the afternoon so that frees up that space. Only one vendor parks onsite but that vendor parks with the other employees and is not parking on the road. Vice Chairman Tabor asked about the picnic table quantity due to the fact that someone indicated that they went to the town for approval for additional picnic tables, and if they are required to go to Zoning to ask for an expansion of use? Ms. Miner corrected that this is misunderstanding and they have the same number of picnic tables that they have had for twenty-five years. She further noted that, last season, there were changes made allowing them to sell wine by the glass, however, they have not done so, but the State required that they set up a layout that was acceptable for this purpose. They needed to comply for their liquor license and they went through the proper channels for those tables.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that the purview of the Board of Police Commission is for safety, parking and traffic. He recommends this item is tabled and for everyone involved to get together when the weather breaks to come up with some suggestions.

Mr. Burke further commented that he would like to know what the neighbors think about speeding along N. Stonington Rd. the other nine months of the year. He commented that they need the road to be safe all twelve months of the years. Chairman O'Shaughnessy suggested that Mr. Burke call the Police Department when he sees traffic issues.

Tabled.

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

Chief Stewart commented that Mr. LaSaracina has not completed the camera system. Chief Stewart suggests giving him two weeks to complete this project and, if it is not done, they will look for someone else to do the work. Chairman O'Shaughnessy agreed that it is time to produce or to be removed. Chief Stewart is sure there are other vendors that can do the job.

Tabled.

5. Traffic / Boating

Chief Stewart commented that there were one or two boating calls this past month.

6. Approval of Minutes from Thursday, January 14, 2021 Regular Meeting *VOTE NEEDED*

Commissioner Elmer made a motion to approve the minutes for the Thursday, January 14, 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

a. Budget Report

According to Chief Stewart we are almost 60% through the budget and have used 58%. We are currently in the black. He noted the biggest expenditures are in the Overtime line item. There are currently five officer vacancies, otherwise the Department is fiscally sound.

b. Monthly Statistics

Chief Stewart noted that there were thirty pistol permit applications last month compared to six last year.

c. Alarm Report

d. Special Events Schedule

The event schedule is blank right now.

e. Bid Waiver Request: Dockside Electronics – Installation of Upgraded Electronics to Marine Patrol Boat *ACTION ITEM*

Lieutenant Schneider sought a quote from Dockside Electronics regarding replacing all the electronics on the police boat. This is in reference to the FEMA grant that was awarded in the amount of \$50,000. As a result, Lieutenant Schneider received a quote in the amount of \$39,644. He is seeking a bid waiver since they have used Dockside Electronics previously for work on the boat and they are located right in town which makes it convenient and quick to fix any issues. Dockside Electronics are very familiar with the systems that they are about to install and have done so on several other public safety vessels in the area.

Commissioner Bates made a motion to go to the Board of Finance to request a bid waiver for Dockside Electronics. Motion seconded by Vice Chairman Tabor. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Lieutenant Schneider has also been working on the body cameras with Axxon. It will cost \$356,000 for body cameras over a five-year term. The fleet quote has not changed, that stands at about \$170,000. Some of the programs and licensing the Department selected may not be necessary so there may be a reduction on the costs for the body cameras. Lieutenant Schneider has been speaking with a new sales representative. A number of payment options are on the table.

Vice Chairman Tabor asked what is the longevity for one of the cameras to which Lieutenant Schneider gave an overview of the program that Axxon provides. The Department would subscribe to a five-year plan which provides a full warranty for the five years for any of the hardware or software. At the end of the five-year term the department would get a new set of cameras for the fleet and, after three years the Department would get a whole new set of body cameras. The Department will be able to constantly rotate out in order to have the most up-to-date equipment and this would be replaced with the newest technology that they have at that time. After the five-year term you would reenroll and it allows the Department to constantly rotate out the equipment of at a pre-given time frame (three and five years) and allows for the Department to have the most up-to-date equipment. Lieutenant Schneider will be in contact with the sales representative to evaluate the options. There is also a five-year payment plan. They can do an early enrollment plan and sign a potential contract in order to get some of the cameras immediately and reduce the cost a bit. Lieutenant Schneider will have more information after the meeting next week.

f. Letters Re: Psychological Services

Chief Stewart commented that this is and FYI for the Police Commission.

g. Officer Brett Cody Resignation *ACTION ITEM*

Chief Stewart explained that Officer Cody is moving on and has accepted a position at Electric Boat.

Vice Chairman Tabor made a motion to accept the resignation of Officer Brett Cody. Motion seconded by Commissioner Turner. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Chief Stewart commented that this leaves five openings, eighteen candidates have taken the LEC exam and there is another exam scheduled soon.

h. Use of Force

Chief Stewart noted that Ms. Mitchell has put together a sheet to show a snapshot of the use of force for each month which will be included in the Police Commission packets. In 2020, every use of force issue was a suspect's failure to comply.

i. Elevator & Side Door Expenses

Chief Stewart noted that both the elevator and side door needed repair. The side door cost approximately \$5,000 and the elevator was almost \$5,000.

j. MOU – Regional Traffic Unit

Chief Stewart stated that there is a MOU between Stonington, Groton Town, and Ledyard. Now Groton City wants to join. This has been sent off to the Board of Selectmen to sign off on.

Chief Stewart has been working closely with Chaplain program. He will try, every third month, to have one of the Chaplains give an update of what is going on with the program. The Chaplains have been active will be connecting with Mobil Outreach and Safe Futures.

According to Chief Stewart, all police officers and dispatchers have been offered Covid-19 vaccinations. A few people have had side effects from the vaccinations. Anyone 65+ can now sign up.

Vice Chairman Tabor asked about the impact the virus has had on the adolescence or high school age children and if Chief Stewart has seen any increase in issues? Chief Stewart noted that juvenile related calls have increased and Officer Browning has been busy assisting the school with children participation with online schooling. There has been an uptick with mental health issues and an increase in public intoxication due to the fact that people are stressed with the restrictions. Vice Chairman Tabor asked if the Youth Officer felt it necessary would they make a referral to the Chaplains to which Chief Stewart answered that they have been doing that when necessary and have also been enlisting a variety of services. Chief Stewart commented that age group may need a counselor and not so much a Chaplain. Commissioner Bates thanked Chief Stewart for his coordination with the Department of Education. She noted that there are specific youth mental health crisis lines and a variety of resources locally and statewide for support. Vice Chairman Tabor commented that the virus is an additional stressor for children. Chief Stewart noted that Officer Saunders has been working with Mobil Outreach and recently followed up with six homes. One asked for assistance. The Department will continue to follow up.

Chairman O'Shaughnessy noted that the Town received a \$500 donation the Formosa Yacht Club, that brings their total donation up to \$1500 that they have made to the Town to use in this area.

8. Consent Agenda

a. Letter Re: POSTC Policy Regarding Police Badge and Name Tag Identification Requirement

9. Executive Session – 6:30 p.m.

Vice Chairman Tabor made a motion to enter into executive session at 6:23 p.m. Motion seconded by Commissioner Elmer. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

10. Return to Public Meeting – Approximately 8:00 p.m.

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At 8:54 p.m. Commissioner Elmer made a motion to exit executive session. Motion seconded by Vice Chairman Tabor. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

The Board of Police Commissioners have conducted interviews for three candidates, Anthony Brito, Thomas Northup and Evan Souza.


Commissioner Elmer made a motion to make a conditional offer to Anthony Brito consisting with him meeting all the requirements going forward through appropriate training and meeting the qualifications through Rhode Island and Connecticut. Commissioner Elmer asked that Mr. Northup and Mr. Souza be placed on a stand-by status conditional to the Board of Police Commissioners having the opportunity to interview additional candidates. Motion seconded by Commissioner Turner. No discussion, all in favor motion approved.

Chief Stewart was instructed to contact the candidates and inform them of the Police Commission's findings.

11. Adjourn

At 8:56 p.m., Commissioner Turner made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Bates all in favor, motion approved. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Robert Elmer
Secretary