

Old Saybrook Police Commission

Regular Meeting
September 24, 2018
MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, September 24, 2018 at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

Present: Chairman Moran, Vice Chairman Von Dassel, Secretary Shippee, Commissioners Reid and Keeney. Chief Spera and Lieutenant DePerry were present from the Department of Police Services.

I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Moran called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led those in attendance with the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Moment of Silence

Remembrance of Past Police Commission Chairman Ernest Sparaco

The Police Commission observed a moment of silence in remembrance of Past Police Commission Chairman Ernest Sparaco who passed away recently.

III. Minutes

a. June 25, 2018 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Keeney made a motion to accept the June 25, 2018 Regular Meeting Minutes. Secretary Shippee seconded the motion. The motion to accept the June 25, 2018 Regular Meeting minutes passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.

b. July 30, 2018 Special Meeting

Commissioner Keeney made a motion to accept the July 30, 2018 Special Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Reid seconded the motion. The motion to accept the July 30, 2018 Special Meeting minutes passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.

IV. Executive Reports

a. Financial

i. FY 18 Budget Summary

Chief Spera stated that within the Commission Packets were end of the fiscal year numbers. He stated that the numbers were provided by Town Hall. The Police Department returned over \$200,000 dollars. He reminded the Commission about the end of the fiscal year expenditures the Police Department made stating that he discussed everything with the First Selectman prior to purchasing anything. He stated that he wrote a letter to the First Selectman and the Finance Director requesting that the Town use the excess money to pre pay the vehicle payments for the next couple of years since tax payers have already been taxed for the \$200,000.00. The First Selectman and Finance Director supported the request and

brought it to the Board of Finance but they denied the request. He stated that he was looking at ways to save future taxpayer money by pre paying some known liabilities.

Commissioner Reid asked why the Board of Finance denied the request.

Chief Spera stated that he wasn't given a reason why he was just told it didn't pass.

The Commission asked Board of Finance member Tom Stevenson who was sitting in the audience why the request was denied and he stated he didn't want to answer.

Chief Spera stated that the other spreadsheets are what is normally provided to the Commission.

ii. Report of Off Budget Accounts

The Commission review the off budget accounts.

Secretary Shippee asked about the Red the Uniform charges under the Driver's Safety Fund and the Law Enforcement Fund.

Chief Spera stated that was for high visibility jackets and Class A uniforms.

iii. FY 19 Budget Status

iv. FY 20 Planning Activities /Schedule

Chief Spera stated that the budget process form FY 2020 will begin soon. He stated that he again will look to keep everything in the most safe, cost effective manner as possible. Budget documents will again be provided to the Commission at the end of December same as last year.

b. Administrative

i. Personnel Report

Chief Spera stated that he wanted to first and foremost commend every single member of the Department of Police Services. He stated that the Department faced very unique challenges over the past couple of weeks. He stated that Jen opened a very disturbing piece of mail that shut the entire Police Department down, the same situation happened at a medical office building the very next day and the Department dealt with multiple school issues. There were also pursuits, stolen car cases and felony arrests. It's been very busy and he stated this is the third consecutive year the Department becomes busier after Labor Day.

There has been three employee resignations. The first was patrolman Andrew Brooks. His letter of registration was passed around to the Commission. The second was Patrolman Trainee Kurt Puzycki who realized that this career was not for him and the third was Patrolman O'Connor who is leaving to go work on the same force as his father and two brothers. He stated that he cannot argue with wanting to Police in his hometown. He passed around his letter and exit interview to the Commission too. He stated there are some changes in dispatch. He stated that Emergency Communication Center is a spot in the budget he is concerned about. There is currently two trainees, one per diem and one full time. He stated that he spoke to the Commission in the past about how the Department has lost per diem

dispatchers in the past and now the Department is paying the trainers and the trainees. He is hoping that the balance evens out soon.

The Chief explained that he also expanded School Resource Officer hours. There has been no credible threats but the students and staff feel come comfortable seeing the Officers present. He complimented the Superintendent of Schools stating that she has been a true partner in safety.

ii. Correspondence

The Chief passed around the correspondence the Department has received.

iii. Discussion and Possible Action on Authorizing the Chief of Police to Commence the Hiring Process for the Position(s) of Patrolman Trainee.

Chief stated that he asked the Chairman to add this item to the agenda. As long as he has been Chief of Police there has never been a full roster of 25 Police Officers. There has always been someone injured, sick, and trainees in the academy and so on. There has never been 25 Police Officers to schedule. Currently the Police Department has three actual vacancies. There are currently two in the academy that will not be actual assets until after March 2019. Another Officer recently fractured his foot while on duty and will be out a couple of weeks. He stated that he is concerned with personnel safety. He stated that the positions are all funded and that no positions are being added. He stated that he wants to replace because of safety and security for the Officer and for the Town. He stated that it's important to the Police Department and any future members that they know the Commission supports them.

The Commission discussed authorizing the Chief of Police to fill the three open positions.

Commissioner Reid asked if there were any flaws in the hiring process.

Chief Spera stated that one thing he would like to change unfortunately he cannot. With Patrolman Puzycki the Town spent about \$55,000 dollars in training before he realized that this career was not for him. In other states the applicant pays to attend the police academy and upon graduation they are able to apply to different Police Departments. Chief stated that he would love to hire certified Police Officers but when someone looks at our benefit package there is no comparison. Nationwide there is a recruitment retention issue.

iv. Discussion and Possible Action on a Police Commission Resolution Committing to Fill Vacant Full Time Patrolman Positions.

Commissioner Keeney made a motion to authorize the Chief of Police to keep the police force staffing at the budgeted level of 25 Officers and to just keep the Commission updated as things change. Commissioner Reid seconded the motion. The Police Commission discussed the motion.

Secretary Shippee stated that she agreed and that the Police Officers she has spoken to are all tired. They can't be putting their lives in danger when they are tired. She asked if it is possible to find out why people are leaving.

Commissioner Keeney stated that he shares the concern about why people are leaving. He went online and looked at stuff and stated that the turnover rates in Police Departments across the country run about 10-11% across the board. He stated that losing 2-3 people a year is actually considered normal.

Chief Spera stated that the interview panel and he have specific and frank conversations with the candidates on what the Old Saybrook Police Department can offer. He stated that they try to set the expectations. People applying are now committed to getting into the law enforcement community. Old Saybrook no longer offers the best benefits for people to stay here without much growth. He stated that he is not advocating that the Town needs to rip up the contract but feel that a bigger pictures focus is needed to find out what will affect us down the road.

The motion to authorize the Chief of Police to keep the police force staffing at the budged level of 25 Officers and to just keep the Commission updated as things change passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.

V. Discussion and Possible Action Concerning the Police Commission Meeting Schedule.

Commissioner Reid made a motion to start meetings and special meetings at 6:00 PM moving forward. Vice Chairman Von Dassel seconded the motion. The motion to start meetings at 6:00PM moving forward passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.

VI. Discussion Concerning a Means to Evaluate the Chief of Police.

The Commission discussed forming a subcommittee at the next meeting to evaluate the Chief.

VII. Discussion and Possible Action Concerning a Commission Practice Concerning "Sunshine" activities

Commissioner Keeney stated that he's disappointed in the Commission in how they response to the passing of such a long term member of the Police Commission.

The Commission discussed how to handle things in the future.

Secretary Shippee stated that in the future she will take care of things.

Commissioner Keeney stated that he will touch base with Secretary Shippee in regards to making a donation to the Shorts4Sean fund in memory of Ernie Sparaco.

VIII. Comments from the Public

Police Union President David Perrotti stood up and thanked the Commission for the commitment to hire and fill the open positions. He stated that it is extremely important to fill those positions and that the Officers greatly appreciate it.

Tom Stevenson served on Police force and was hired by Ernie Sparaco. Wanted to give thanks for his dedicated service to the town.

Joe Maselli expressed his gratitude for the recent situations at the schools. He stated that he cannot express how impressed he and other parents are with everything. He is a High School administrator and he knows how much time it takes during these investigations and applauded the Chief and his staff for such swift responses.

Barry O'Neill wanted to thank the Police Department for Ernie's services. He stated that the Chief and his men did a great job respecting Ernie's wife's wishes but still honoring Ernie.

A member of the public stated that the traffic light on Rt. 1 is too long and it's creating a dangerous situation.

Eleanor Laplace stated that the Police Department should look into regionalizing so neighboring towns can share Police Officers.

IX. Comments from the Chief of Police

Chief Spera updated the Commission on the fleet roll out.

He stated that a mass call systems has been introduced to parents attending the High School and Middle School open house and this week at the Elementary School open house.

He stated that he has offered to the Republican and Democratic Committees to host a meeting at the Police Department.

X. Comments and/or Concerns from Commissioners

Commissioner Keeney stated that he wanted to join the members of the public and thank the Chief of Police and his staff for a job well done in September.

XI. Adjournment

Commissioner Keeney made a motion to adjourn. Vice Chairman Von Dassel seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn passed with a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against.

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM.

The next regular Police Commission meeting is scheduled for October 22, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the first floor conference room at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jennifer D'Amato
Records Clerk for the Old Saybrook Police Commission