

## **Old Saybrook Police Commission**

Regular Meeting

September 23, 2019

### **MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, September 23, 2019 at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

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

#### **I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Von Dassel called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and led those in attendance with the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **II. Comments from the Public**

David Perrotti stood up and addressed the Commission as the Police Union President. He stated that he and many Police Officer who are in attendance tonight are concerned about Commissioner Shippee's conduct as a Commissioner. He stated that back in November of 2018 Police Officers had an incident with Commissioner Shippee during a family member's arrest. The Union wrote a letter addressing their concerns about her behavior back then and he attended a meeting and he thought the issue was resolved. Three weeks ago Commissioner Shippee again showed up to a crime scene where a family member was being arrested to video tape the arrest. Her showing up to the scene creates an Officer Safety issue. Commissioner Shippee showing up to the crime scene represents to the Police Department members that she is more concerned with her family member's safety than the Officers. Detective Perrotti stated that each Officer shows up to work every day and deals with everything on a professional basis and that Commissioner Shippee did not do that. He stated that this is not being done on a personal level but on a professional level.

Eleanor LaPlace stated that she has a few concerns. She stated that she is concerned that 25% of the budget is going to the Police Department and she stated that she would like to see the Old Saybrook Police Department and Chief Spera evaluated. She also asked what is additional duty and is that paid at a straight time rate or overtime. She then asked if private duty jobs were construction jobs.

Chairman Von Dassel stated that he would get her the information she is asking for.

Bob stated that he lived on Coulter Street and began to make some inappropriate comments, the Chairman asked him to stop and he continued to speak and two Police Officers escorted him out of the meeting.

#### **III. Minutes**

##### **a. August 26, 2019 Regular Meeting**

**Commissioner Keeney made a motion to accept the August 26, 2019 Regular Meeting Minutes.**

**Commissioner Reid seconded the motion. The motion to accept the August 26, 2019 Regular Meeting Minutes passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.**

#### **IV. Executive Reports**

##### **a. Financial**

##### **1. FY 20 Status Report**

Chief Spera stated that the reports were in the packets and asked the Commission if they had any questions on them.

##### **b. Administrative**

##### **1. Personnel Report**

Chief Spera stated that Officer Kostek graduated field training and has been on patrol for almost a whole week. He stated that Officer Kostek will be scheduled to come to a Commission meeting to reconnect and review the hiring and FTO process with the Commission.

He stated that Officer Tourjee passed her written test and will be field tested hopefully later this week.

Chief Spera advised the Commission that there has been a resignation of full time dispatcher. The open slot has been filled by Caitlin Murray. She was the one hired to the 8<sup>th</sup> full time dispatcher in January but she has now moved up and will start full time soon. The Department is also in the final stages of filling the records clerk position.

He stated that the Academy is starting in November for new hire not December like initially told.

He stated that later on agenda the Commission hopefully will be filling the Sergeant position that has been vacant since 2014.

Chief Spera stated that a lot of crimes are happening in Old Saybrook but that he is constantly amazed with how his staff performs and the level of work they are turning out and solving crimes. He stated that as he has said before he is blessed with the best staff.

##### **2. OSPD 60 – New Event Added!**

He stated that he along with his staff are very excited as there is lots of stuff coming up. He has added a new event for October. The Old Saybrook Police Department will be participating in National coffee with a cop day.

The Police Commission discussed how the events will be paid for with Commissioner Cooper stating that he wasn't necessarily a fan of donations since he felt that most people will give money and expect something in return. Chief Spera stated that that is questioning the integrity of himself and his staff and that many people make donations and don't expect anything in return. He stated that the Police Department is not seeking donations but if someone would like to donate the department would gratefully accept them. He stated that he nor his staff could compromise their integrity.

Chairman Von Dassel stated that the Commission has discussed numerous times thing that the Police Department could make better, public relations with the Community it something that is always brought up. This is something that is good for our town so we should be supporting this event he said.

### **3. K-9 Program Update**

Chief Spera stated that Patrolman White and Sonny started K-9 school and are running a lot.

### **4. RFP Work Update**

Chief Spera stated that Commissioner Wilcox and he have been communicating a lot about this. The highlights are that there will soon be a final draft. The next meeting will hopefully be in the next few weeks. He stated that they seem to have reached a consensus to use the existing RFP with one change. He said there is more work to come but a lot has been accomplished.

Chairman Von Dassel asked if dates have been picked to meet again.

Chief Spera stated that he will check on room availability and float around dates for the second week of October.

### **5. Correspondence**

Chief Spera passed around the most recent correspondence.

### **V. Discussion Concerning the Evaluation of the Chief of Police**

Chairman Von Dassel stated that working on the RFP and getting that out is more important to focus on right now. He stated that we need to concentrate on that right now and then focus on this after we have finalized that.

The Commission agreed.

### **VI. Discussion Concerning the Process of Endorsing Ideas/Proposals.**

Chairman Von Dassel asked Secretary Wilcox to explain this agenda item as it was he who wanted it added.

Secretary Wilcox stated that he would like more advance notice on things the Chief wants the Commission to endorse or back. He would like more time so the Commission can decide if they have any questions or concerns.

Chief Spera asked when has an action item required by the agenda not been given proper notice.

Secretary Wilcox stated the second K-9.

Chief Spera stated that the K-9 was on the agenda but that adding a second dog is an operational decision and that the Commission can say no to it but the Department will still move forward.

Commissioner Reid stated that he enjoys being aware of what's going on within the Police Department.

**VII. Discussion and Possible Action to Enter into Executive Session for the Purpose of Discussion a Personnel Matter.**

Commissioner Keeney made a motion to enter into Executive Session for the Purpose of Discussion a Personnel Matter inviting Chief Spera, Lieutenant DePerry and Jennifer Damato to join. Commissioner Reid seconded the motion. The motion to enter into Executive Session passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.

The Commission entered into Executive Session at 7:44PM.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to exit Executive Session at 7:57PM. Commissioner Reid seconded the motion. The motion to exit Executive Session passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.

**VIII. Discussion and Possible Action to Enter into Executive Session for the Purpose of Interviewing a Candidate for the Position of Patrol Sergeant.**

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to enter into Executive Session for the Purpose of interviewing a candidate for the Position of Patrol Sergeant inviting Chief Spera, Lieutenant DePerry and Jennifer Damato to join. Commissioner Moran seconded the motion. The motion to enter passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.

The Commission entered into Executive Session at 7:57 PM

Officer Warren entered Executive Session at 8:08 PM

Officer Warren exited Executive Session at 8:26PM

Commissioner Keeney made a motion to exit Executive Session at 8:27PM and resume public session. Commissioner Cooper seconded the motion. The motion to exit Executive Session passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.

**IX. Discussion and Action concerning the Appointment of a Patrol Sergeant.**

Commissioner Reid made a motion to promote Officer Warren to Patrol Sergeant at a time that operationally fits the needs of the Department. Commissioner Cooper seconded the motion. The motion to promote Officer Warren to Patrol Sergeant passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.

**X. Comments from the Chief of Police**

Chief Spera stated that he has a grave concern. He stated that members of the Police Department came forth tonight with a serious concern and with all due respect it seems to have fallen on deaf ears. There has been no reacting to what they said. He stated that he cannot remember the last time where the union presented a concern to the Police Commission. He stated that they need to support the men and women in their concern. He said this is the second time something like this has come up and he hopes that it will be the last time. He asked them to please discuss this with the men and women who

have the concern. If you want a positive working environment I hope that we can add an agenda item for next meeting to discuss this he stated.

Commissioner Keeney stated that with all due respect we are told not to ask questions or respond to public comments.

Chief Spera stated that there are some Triple E concerns which impacts the Department. He stated that our folks work after dusk and it's a scary disease.

Chief Spera stated that he proposed to Superintendent of Schools and High School Principal a vape buyback program. There would be NO law enforcement sanctions for any young adult trading in a vape but they would be referred to counselor. Hopefully part of a large program at the high school. Sometime during the month of October.

Commissioner Keeney asked if the vaping is part of the DARE Program.

Chief Spera stated that no as the DARE program is limited to 5<sup>th</sup> grade only. DARE has K-12<sup>th</sup> grade programs but the district only allows them to teach to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

Commissioner Reid asked where the buyback funds would come from.

Chief Spera stated that he has been speaking with the Finance Director about this and that funds could come from the DARE account but that he has been speaking with Senator Blumenthal regarding the program and that possibly federal dollars would be able to help with this unique program. It helps make kids healthier.

#### **XI. Comments and/or Concerns from the Commissioners**

Commissioner Cooper asked if Vice Chairman Shippee interfered when she showed up to the crime scene.

Detective Perrotti stated that when you show up to scene you are not Donald Cooper, you are a Commissioner. It's already happened once with Commissioner Shippee and the Officers are out doing their job trying to be safe. You're either a citizen or you're a Police Commissioner.

Chief Spera stated that the actions of Vice Chairman Shippee took resources that should have been doing something else away to manage her.

Vice Chairman Shippee stated that when this incident happened last time there was an executive session in which a letter was passed around stating that her behavior was uncalled for. She stated that it didn't happen the way everyone else said it did but that there was no video footage to back anything up. She stated that she showed up to video tape it to make sure someone's right were not taken away.

Chief Spera stated that by saying she showed up to make sure someone's rights were not taken away sends a clear message to our Department that you don't trust what they do. As a Commissioner delivering that message is harmful and hurtful to the members of the agency. He stated that while she was at the scene she made several comments about himself (Chief Spera), about Patrolman Palmieri, about an ethnicity and brought up matters that had to do with her capacity as a Police Commissioner.

The Sergeant at one point stated to Commissioner Shippee to please stop discussing this with him as it had nothing to do with him.

Commissioner Reid stated that he apologizes to the Police Union that this happened. It should not have happened. He stated that the perception of the Police Commission is tainted with the young Officers and that poor judgement was used. He stated the Police Department members cannot trust Commissioner Shippee voting on issues that affect their livelihood and their safety.

Secretary Wilcox stated that the job of a Commissioner isn't to yea ra ra the Department all the time. It is to consider all the facts and yes to support but to correct discipline or fire even if not doing the job correctly.

Chief Spera stated that he doesn't mean this to sound disrespectful but that the Police Commission only exists in body at public session. There is no right of any individual Commission member to show up to a scene and evaluate.

Commissioner Reid asked Detective Perrotti if the Officers who came to him with concerns were distracted by Commissioner Shippee being there.

Detective Perrotti stated yes they were. They were there trying to do their job. The Department isn't here looking for yea ra ra, he stated that Commissioner Wilcox was missing the point when he made that comment. He stated that Officers are at a scene doing their job, they are wearing body cameras, the car have cameras and there is a live car feed right back to the Police Department dispatch center but they are still calling their judgement into question.

Sergeant DeMarco stated that never in his 23 years in law enforcement has he seen something like this happen. Commission Shippee took a Sergeant who should have been overseeing the scene away to watch her and her brother.

Vice Chairman Shippee stated that her only interaction with Officer Palmieri was one comment.

Chief Spera stated that Patrolman Palmieri asked a question of your brother and then stated to him that he doesn't have to answer it if he didn't want to. You then asked what Officer that was and once Officer Palmieri was identified you stated that he would soon hear from you or something like that.

Commissioner Shippee stated that they are attacking her character and that she doesn't appreciate it.

Chief Spera stated that she cannot sit there and say things like you wanted to make sure they were not doing anything wrong after what has previously happened.

Vice Chairman Shippee stated that her brother was assaulted in the lobby and that there was never any footage available.

Chief Spera stated that say this is all true, she still came to an incident that did not involve her. There was nothing that she captured that was need for her to depend herself. She was called by a family member who is over the age of 18 and she chose to respond.

Chairman Von Dassel asked the Union what would satisfy them.

Commissioner Cooper stated that this is something that the Commission takes seriously. What makes matters worse is that it's been going on for a while. He stated that there are a lot of assumption going on here but that he's not sure what the Commission can legally can do.

**Commissioner Keeney made a motion to that the Commission reprimand Commissioner Shippee for her conduct on that night in question with a warning that if it happens again we will ask for her resignation from this Commission. There was no second. The motion did not pass.**

Commissioner Reid asked if the Union is concerned about Commissioner Shipping having a grudge against the Police Department.

Detective Perrotti stated that the Union is concerned about repeated behavior that is unnecessary. The Union comes before the board for labor negotiations, promotions and more and she is calling their integrity and trust into question.

Chairman Von Dassel stated that he would like to table this and put it on the agenda for next month as this was all new to him too. He had heard rumors but the facts were not presented to him before his meeting and he would like to get some legal advice first.

Commission Reid stated that the only right thing to see happen would be for Commissioner Shippee to set up to the plate and resign.

Vice Chairman Shippee stated that would not happen.

## **XII. Adjournment**

Secretary Wilcox made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Reid seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn passed with a vote of 7 in favor and 0 against.

The meeting adjourned at 8:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

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