

Old Saybrook Police Commission

Special Meeting

July 20, 2020

MINUTES

A special meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, July 20, 2020 at the Old Saybrook Police Department. The meeting was recorded.

Present: Chairman Keeney, Vice Chairman Reid, Secretary Maselli, Commissioners Von Dassel, Quish and Shippee. Chief Spera and Captain DePerry was present from the Department of Police Services.

I. Call to Order/Opening Remarks/Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Keeney called the meeting to order at 6:07 PM. He welcomed everyone and introduced the guest speakers, the Police Commission, the Board of Selectman and other distinguished guests. He then led those in attendance with the Pledge of Allegiance.

First Selectman Fortuna congratulated Captain DePerry and Sergeant Hardy and welcomed Patrolman Harris. He expressed his sincere appreciation to the three of them and all the public safety professionals for the career they have chosen. He stated that Old Saybrook's finest goes above and beyond every day not only as Police Officers but as the town's first responders. He stated that work of Police Officers is not easy but each and every one of them has chosen this proud and noble profession. He stated that he has worked alongside Captain DePerry and stated that he is very deserving of this promotion and offered his congratulations. To Patrol Sergeant Hardy he stated with his promotion comes more responsibilities but that he is the right man for the job and he offered his best wishes to him. He welcomed Patrolman Harris and stated as he begins his career First Selectman Fortuna feels that he couldn't have chosen a finer community. He asked Patrolman Harris to please get to know Old Saybrook, it is a special place and he told him that he will be treated with kindness and respect for all that he will do. He then thanked them for choosing what they do every day. He also thanked Chief Spera and Chairman Keeney.

Chairman Keeney reviewed the Police Commission accomplishments over the past 10 months. This includes the following:

- The Department's 60th Anniversary Celebration
- Reviewing and approving the fiscal year 2021 budget
- Reviewing 2019's executive accomplishments
- Receiving the executive goals for 2020 and conducting a mid- year review of these goals
- Worked with the Chief to enhance communication between his office and the Commission
- Participated in Police Contract negotiations
- Authorized the replacement of Police Office Duty Weapons, replacing models that were well over ten year old
- Received numerous briefing concerning the operation of the Department and the delivery of Law Enforcement Services to the community during Pandemic
- Hired a consultant to enhance the Department's Policies to ensure they meet standard and are easier to access by our personnel
- Received and posted to the Department's website our Notice of Compliance to Law Enforcement standards and Practices as well as positing those compliant policies to our website
- Completed a patrol sergeant process

- Established the position of Captain

He stated that the Police Commission still has a lot of work to do. Over next month's they will review recommendations to replace the department's records management system, receive a presentation on pursuing CALEA accreditation, discuss the Department's fleet replacement program, learning more about the Department's Operations and the efficiencies learned during the COVID response and begin discussions regarding fiscal year 2022 budget. He stated that the Police Commission is hard at work for community and the Police Department. They are proud of men and women who provide superior service. He asked the Police Officers to please continue to work hard and continue to forge positive relationships with community members and business owners. He then stated to the Police Department that they have this Commission's respect and support and that their safety is important to them and that the Police Officers are important to them.

Chief Spera welcomed everyone and thanked the Police Commission for scheduling the Special Meeting which opened up this presentation, which is normally not public, for all to view in person and online. He thanked the Police Commission for their leadership and he spoke about the current climate for law enforcement professionals across the country. He stated that law enforcement professionals as a whole should not be identified with those who wore the same uniform that committed heinous criminal acts but that they should be defined by heroic actions that law enforcement professionals make every day. He stated that the tide will eventually change and that law enforcement professionals will be celebrated again because good always wins over evil. He spoke about fostering change and the need for collaborating stating he applauded the Board of Selectman for tabling the appointment of new Police Commissioner after he requested they put forward a diverse candidate who is more representative of members of the Department. He asked for the Democratic Town Leaders to pause and listen to the National conversations and the conversations happening each week locally and to forward a name to the Board of Selectman that will add diversity to the Police Commission. He pledged to the families in attendance that their loved ones safety and current Department members safety always be his number one priority.

II. Graduation Ceremony

Keynote Speaker # 1

Chief James Rovella, Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection spoke. He welcomed Officer Harris to the family, speaking of a greater family, dispatchers, fire fighters, town hall employees and more saying that they all get the honor to serve and protect. He spoke about how everyone has to be respectful to each other and each of those Departments and that we all have to work together. He spoke about how the good times will outweigh the bad times but he told them not to disrespect the badge and the good men and women who serve behind it. He spoke to Sergeant Hardy about how he is going to have to be supervising and how much responsibility he will have now. He said there is much to live up to now but that he will and has to because the Police Department depends on it. He spoke to Captain DePerry stating there will still be good times doing police work but much will be overseeing and reviewing but stating that you have to embrace it. He told the Police Officers to never change. He stated to the citizen of Old Saybrook embrace your Police Department and make an effort to talk to the Officers and he told the Police Officers to talk to residents people want to know why you do things, about your training etc. Engage with the public he said. He addressed the Chief stating "you do it right here." He sees how you grow new explorers, he sees them doing traffic, he sees them smiling, shaking hands (pre COVID of course), and he sees how officers are dressed correctly and that makes a difference. He addressed the Police Commission telling them that the Chief is doing it right here. He's seen a lot of police department not only around here but across the country there is a lot to be said about

homegrown officers, giving them the right training, educating them, and pushing them up thru the ranks so please continue doing that he said.

a. Patrolman

Austin Harris was sworn in as Patrolman by Judge McShane. His badge was pinned on by his mother Francesca Brooks and his boyfriend Billion Stempel.

III. Promotional Ceremony

Keynote Speaker # 2

Mr. Michael Gailor, States Attorney Middlesex County spoke. He thanked the Chief for inviting him there and the Board of Selectman and the Police Commission. He spoke about one of the great things about his job is getting to see the great work done by these offices on a daily basis. One of the other great things is seeing the response the community has and how they appreciate the fine work they do. He spoke about Patrolman Harris, Sergeant Hardy and Captain DePerry congratulating them and thanking them. He spoke about trust and how he, the Chief and the Department demands acting in the highest standards. He stated that Police Officers gain trust in small hurdles but can lose that trust with a single negative act and to always remember that.

a. Patrol Sergeant

Chief Spera stated that Solomon Hardy applied to become Patrol Sergeant back in January of 2020. He was pleased to state that today Sergeant Hardy will become the first black patrol Sergeant in the Department's sixty plus year history.

Solomon Hardy was sworn in as Patrol Sergeant by Judge McShane. His badge was pinned on by Rev. Benjamin Watts of the Shy-low Baptist Church.

Keynote Speaker # 3

Mr. Peter McShane, Superior Court Judge spoke. He stated that it is no secret when he was working as the states attorney Old Saybrook was one of his favorite places because whenever he would call the Chief or the Captain for anything by the time he hung up it was done. There was great communication and great investigations and he was so proud to be part of this group. He stated there will be bumps along the road but there is not a more rewarding profession. To the Police Officers, thank you for doing God's work.

b. Captain

Jeffrey DePerry was sworn in as Captain by Judge McShane. His badge was pinned on by his wife Lauren and children Jackson, Nathan and Brooklyn. Captain DePerry becomes the second Captain in Department history.

IV. Discussion & Possible Action Concerning a Resolution of the Commission

Secretary Maselli read a resolution of the Commission into the minutes.

Resolution Honoring and Commending Police Chief Michael A. Spera

WHEREAS Michael Spera began volunteering for the Old Saybrook Department of Police Services as a teenager and has continued his commitment to the department to this day;

WHEREAS Michael Spera entered the Connecticut Police Academy in 1996, became a sworn Officer in Old Saybrook, served as School Resource Officer, Patrolman, DARE Instructor, Lieutenant, and Deputy Chief;

WHEREAS Michael Spera was promoted to Chief of the Old Saybrook Police Department in 2009 and has served with distinction for over ten years;

WHEREAS Chief Michael Spera has worked tirelessly to improve the performance and efficiency of the department, increase the department's connection with the community, and keep the residents of Old Saybrook safe.

RESOLVED, that the Old Saybrook Police Commission:

- 1. Compliments Chief Spera on the performance of the Department of Police Services under his leadership;**
- 2. Expresses the highest level of confidence in Chief Spera's ability to lead the Department of Police Services;**
- 3. Extends our sincerest appreciation for Chief Spera's dedication to the department and to the community of Old Saybrook;**
- 4. Congratulates our Chief on his 10 years of exemplary leadership;**
- 5. Presents Chief Michael A. Spera with a 3rd star to wear in his role as the Chief of Police for the town of Old Saybrook.**

Executed this 20th day of July, 2020.

Commissioner Quish made a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Von Dassel seconded the motion. The motion to approve the resolution of the Commission passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against and 0 abstaining.

Chief Spera's stars were pinned on by his wife Heather and children Kendall and Kaden.

V. Comments from Commissioners

The Commission congratulated Patrolman Harris, Sergeant Hardy and Captain DePerry. They told the Department to keep up the good work and thanked them for choosing Old Saybrook.

VI. Adjournment / Ceremony Reception

Vice Chairman Reid made a motion to adjourn. Secretary Maselli seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 opposed, 0 abstaining.

The meeting adjourned at 7:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

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