

Old Saybrook Police Commission
Regular Meeting
April 22, 2024
MINUTES

A regular hybrid meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, April 22, 2024. The meeting was recorded and can be viewed in its entirety at <https://youtu.be/a9o8otsT-Bo>

Present: Chairman Wilcox, Vice Chairman Shippee, Secretary Notar-Francesco, Commissioners Von Dassel, Calle, Ciliano and Prast. Chief Spera was present from the Department of Police Services.

I. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance (0:21)

Chairman Wilcox called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM for the Police Commission and led those in attendance with the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Comments from the Public (0:41)

Carol Manning commented.

III. Discussion and Possible Action on the Meeting Minutes for: (3:25)

a. Regular Meeting – March 25, 2024 (3:25)

Secretary Notar-Francesco made a motion to approve the March 25, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Ciliano seconded the motion. The motion to approve passed with a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstaining.

b. Special Meeting – April 16, 2024 (3:51)

Secretary Notar-Francesco made a motion to approve the April 16, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Calle seconded the motion. The motion to approve passed with a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstaining.

IV. Correspondence (4:14)

Chairman Wilcox stated that he had nothing to report other than what he has previously shared.

V. Executive Reports (4:29)

a. FY 25 Budget Process (4:44)

Chief Spera stated that the process for the FY 25 Budget is now going to town meeting and referendum.

b. FY 2024 Operating Budget (4:54)

There were no questions about the FY 24 Budget.

c. Off Budget Accounts (5:07)

There were no questions regarding the Off Budget Accounts.

d. Personnel Matters – Employee Resignations (5:44)

Chief Spera updated the Commission on Personnel Matters.

Patrolman O’Connell has been deployed overseas and will be there for about 6 months.

Dispatcher Kristin Gondek will be heading to school for training in Germany for a couple weeks.

Patrolman Eric Lawrence has resigned. Chief Spera stated that they will be discussing this matter more in Executive Session.

Sergeant Christopher Palmieri is leaving the agency and going to Middletown in hopes of getting better benefits. Chief Spera stated this was one of those regrettable losses. Sergeant Palmieri was raised in Old Saybrook and is one of the last “native sons” here.

Chairman Wilcox stated that Sergeant Palmieri is a great loss and that hopefully the negotiation committee will keep the letter that he wrote the Police Commission, the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen in mind.

Secretary Notar-Francesco asked the Chief to relay her gratitude to Sergeant Palmieri for sharing his letter with the Commission.

e. Professional Development Update (8:18)

Chief Spera advised the Commission that Patrolman Moriarty graduated from the Police Academy and passed his EMR exam.

Patrolman Mora completed Field Training Officer school.

f. Activity Report (9:37)

There were no questions on the activity report.

Chief Spera stated that employees are pulling extra duty and working very hard.

g. PERF Onsite Visit (10:54)

Chief Spera presented the website www.perfstudy.com to the Commission. The website was designed by the Chief to house all the documents that PERF requested from the Department. The Chief reviewed the website with the Commission and showed them some of the documents that have been put online.

Commissioner Calle asked if members of the public can view the website.

Chief Spera replied yes.

Commissioner Prast stated that she reviewed the website the other day.

Chief Spera stated that the PERF Team comes the week of May 6th. He stated that he has reached out to the Dispatchers to see if they want to meet with them. He stated that he has not heard anything back from them. He stated that the Police Union will be meeting with their leadership to decide their level of participation.

VI. Continued Discussion Concerning Agency Structure, Decision Points, and Process. (21:13)

Commissioner Prast stated that she met with Chief Spera over the weekend and they came up with a proposal. She passed around her printout regarding her ideas for the agency structure. She proposed 2 Lieutenants, one supervising Field Services and the other Support Services. She proposed promoting two employees from within the agency. The Lieutenants would switch supervising responsibilities at some point and would be cross trained gaining experience running the Field Services side and the Support Services side.

Chief Spera stated that the Captain position would be eliminated and instead there would be a Deputy Chief. The Deputy Chief would be out of the Union. The Lieutenant positions would be part of the Union.

Chief Spera stated that the Lieutenant positions would be filled first. The Deputy Chief search is going to take more time. A lot is going to need to go into that position. A salary and benefit package would need to be decided on and the Commission cannot choose a salary until the contract is settled. The Commission will need to know what the Master Sergeant and Lieutenant positions would be making in order to properly compensate a Deputy Chief position.

Commissioner Ciliano stated that the Lieutenants need to be in the Union. He fully supports that. His concern is that they cannot handle discipline if they are part of the Union. He feels that a Deputy Chief should be hired first before the Lieutenant positions.

The Chief stated that any position below the "Second in Command" position would be part of the Union. He also stated that law enforcement is different regarding who can handle discipline. He stated that Sergeants are in charge of the shifts and can handle discipline. He stated that Sergeants or Master Sergeants can be assigned investigations. They cannot investigate up, but can investigate down.

Chief Spera stated that 2 Lieutenants would help him. He stated that 2 Lieutenants would help morale.

Chairman Wilcox stated that he is in favor of taking the idea that the Chief and Commissioner Prast worked on but only having one Lieutenant and he doesn't like leaving the empty box for the Deputy Chief. He stated that the Deputy would give the Chief more help than he currently has. He stated that he would like to go slowly with that budget that is about to be approved by the Town, and that he is reluctant to have the Lieutenant in the Union.

The Chief suggested that the Commission pass the agency structure model and let him implement it. He stated that the Commission would pause on the Deputy Chief position while he creates middle management, which would be two independent professionals who will learn both sides of the house. When the Commission is ready to fill that Deputy Chief position, he suggested that they can go to the

Board of Finance for additional funding. He stated that this approach plans for the future, inspires upward mobility and doesn't fiscally hurt the operation.

The Commission wanted it stated that they are not adding any more cops. The Commission is moving titles and revising structure.

Chief Spera stated that should the plan be approved, he will take some money allotted to the "Second in Command" position and use it to cover the increase in salary for the two Lieutenant positions.

VII. Discussion and Possible Action Concerning Agency Structure. (1:31:43)

Secretary Notar-Francesco made a motion to add two Lieutenants, as middle management, to the structure for the Department and that they are Union positions. Commission Ciliano seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor (Wilcox/Notar-Francesco/Calle/Ciliano/Von Dassel/Prast), 1 opposed (Shippee) and 0 abstaining.

The Commission discussed requirements for the Lieutenant position.

The Chief directed them to the proposal he previously gave them. The proposal had the following guidelines.

Must have at least 8 years as a POSTC certified Officer.

Must have prior supervisory experience.

Must have an Associates or Bachelor's Degree.

Must be a Field Training Officer, POSTC instructor, etc.

Chief suggested that the Commission not make it so narrow that we lessen the pool who will apply.

VIII. Discussion and Possible Action to Authorize the Chief of Police to Implement Such Process / Processes Required to Execute the Commission's Newly Authorized Agency Structure. (1:32:49)

Commissioner Ciliano made a motion to authorize the Chief to conduct the promotional process for the positions of Lieutenant with the position qualifications as detailed in the proposal. Commissioner Prast seconded the motion. The motion passed with vote of 6 in favor (Wilcox/Notar-Francesco/Calle/Ciliano/Von Dassel/Prast), 0 opposed and 1 abstaining (Shippee).

Commissioner Calle made a motion to amend the agenda and move agenda item #IX to follow agenda item #XII. Commissioner Prast seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstaining.

IX. Discussion and Possible Action to Enter into Executive Session for an Employee Matter. (1:45:45)

Commissioner Ciliano made a motion to enter into Executive Session inviting Chief Spera, Master Sergeant DeMarco, Sergeant Walsh and Detective Sergeant Williams to join. Commissioner Calle seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstaining.

The Commission took a short break at 8:16 PM.

The Commission entered into Executive Session at 8:20 PM.

The Commission exited Executive Session at 8:59 PM and resumed Public Session.

X. Comments from the Public (1:43:04)

There were no comments from the Public.

XI. Comments from the Chief of Police (1:43:31)

There were no comments from the Chief of Police.

XII. Comments from Police Commissioners (1:43:41)

Secretary Notar-Francesco commented.

Commissioner Calle commented.

Commissioner Von Dassel commented.

Commissioner Prast commented.

XIII. Adjournment

Commissioner Von Dassel made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Ciliano seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn passed with a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstaining.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

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