

**OLD SAYBROOK POLICE COMMISSION**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**March 24, 2014**  
**MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Commission was held on Monday, March 24, 2014, at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

**Present:** Chairman Finch, Vice Chairman Savino, Commissioners Dunlap, Maselli, Sparaco and Stuart were present. Chief Spera and Lieutenant Roche were present from the Department of Police Services.

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

Chairman Finch called the meeting to order at 7:00PM and led the Police Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. Minutes**

A. February 24, 2014 Regular Meeting

**Commissioner Maselli made a motion to approve the February 24, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sparaco. The motion was approved with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against.**

Commissioner Dunlap referred to a discussion regarding Commission Correspondence and asked if the Police Commission was receiving Correspondence that was not being reviewed.

Chairman Finch replied that any Correspondence addressed to the Police Commission is being forwarded to the group for review, however, some letters addressed to the Department or the Chief are not necessarily forwarded to the group.

Chief Spera added that the Department will receive the occasional "Thank You" letter and it is hung up somewhere in-house, rather than forwarded to the Police Commission. He also stated that when a letter comes into the Department and is addressed to the Police Commission, he calls Chairman Finch and informs him of the Correspondence immediately so that important matters can be addressed as quickly as possible.

**III. Comments from the Public**

There were no comments from the public.

**IV. Executive Reports**

A. Financial

1. 13-14 Operating/Contractual Budgets

Chief Spera stated that the same line items from the previous month are still highlighted this month. He also stated that the Expenses and Supplies budget is approximately 70% expended and the Contractual budget is approximately 30% expended.

Chairman Finch asked why the Contractual budget was only 30% expended.

Chief Spera replied that some of the Contractual items have not been billed to the department yet and that the largest Contractual line item, Legal, has not been expended at all this fiscal year.

2. 14-15 Budget Process Update

Chief Spera stated that Tuesday night would be the first budget hearing with the Board of Finance. He stated that he met with the Department's Board of Finance liaisons and reviewed the current version of the budget. One of the proposed revisions is to lower the Capital Budget to reflect the exact lease payment for the new

Department vehicles, rather than set the budget at \$100,000. Chief Spera also stated that there was a conversation about budgeting to actual data but that the Department would need to be properly funded before this budgeting practice could be implemented.

Chairman Finch invited the other Commissioners to attend the meeting which will take place at 7:00PM in the Old Saybrook Town Hall First Floor Conference Room.

3. Asset Forfeiture

**Balance: \$20,920.73**

Chief Spera informed the Commission that in 2006 the Department handled a case where money was seized from the Comfort Inn raids. Because of cooperation given from the Groton Long Point Police, money was promised to their Department which was never received. After conducting some internal research, a note was found promising \$492.85 to the Groton Long Point Police Department. That money will be deducted from this account and delivered to the Groton Long Point Department.

4. Capital Sinking Fund

**Balance: \$21,158.14**

Chief Spera informed the Commission that this account has been officially renamed the Police Administrative Fund. This account will be the new home for money received in the pistol permit process. At the end of each quarter the state will invoice the Department for background checks and fingerprinting. Those invoices will be paid from the pistol permit deposits into this account.

5. Traffic Safety Fund

**Balance: \$28,589.44**

6. Law Enforcement Fund

**Balance: \$17,207.53**

Commissioner Burnham has made contact with Detective Perrotti and has begun familiarizing herself with the responsibilities of the subcommittee.

7. Old Saybrook Police Fund

**Balance: \$320.00**

8. Police Explorer Fund

**Balance: \$4,970.27**

Chairman Finch asked if the Police Explorer fund had increased.

Chief Spera responded that the fund has remained stagnant.

9. Police K-9 Fund

**Balance: \$1,479.24**

Vice Chairman Savino asked when Patrolman Ziolkovski was due to return from his non work related illness. -

Chief Spera replied that he is currently going through a back to work program and that he should be available to return to duty by the end of the week.

Commissioner Maselli asked if Zeus would also be eligible to return to active duty.

Chief Spera stated that Zeus could also return to active duty but that he and Patrolman Ziolkovski need to participate in some recertification programs.

## B. Administrative

### 1. Contract Negotiations Update – Police Union

Chief Spera stated that the First Selectman has sent communications to the Police Union strongly urging them to resume contract bargaining. A list of possible meeting dates was sent to the Police Union but there has been no response thus far.

### 2. Public Safety Communications

Chief Spera informed the Commission that there was a recent issue with the main police channel in the Department radio system. The Department temporarily switched to another channel but has returned to the main police channel as of today. Chief Spera stated that the cost of fixing the radio issue was \$1,700.00, which would be taken out of the Emergency Management budget.

Chairman Finch asked how long it would be until the replacement part needed to fix the radio system came in.

Chief Spera stated that shipping for the part was expedited and that the part should be ready to ship in three to four weeks.

### 3. Activity Report

Chief Spera informed the Commission that the Activity Report for the month had not yet been completed and that the Commission would be updated next month.

### 4. Fleet Update

Chief Spera reported that all of the new vehicles are in various stages of being outfitted. He added that two SUV's would be ready next week and the Detective car would be ready by the end of the current week. The second Canine vehicle is already in use.

### 5. FOI Hearing

Chief Spera informed the Commission that a citizen had filed a Freedom of Information Act complaint against the Department, which required an FOI hearing. The complaint was in regards to the \$8.00 search fee that the Department charges citizens for a record search and a copy of releasable police reports. Chief Spera stated that this issue has already been brought to a hearing and was deemed to not be in violation of any FOI regulations and that the citizen who filed the complaint has filed more than ten complaints against the Department over the years. In point of fact, the citizen has received over 1,200 pieces of paper from the department and has never been charged the \$8.00 search fee or any copy fees.

Commissioner Dunlap asked if the citizen making the case was arguing on someone else's behalf.

Chief Spera responded that the citizen claims he is arguing on behalf of society.

Chairman Finch asked why the citizen has never been charged the \$8.00 search fee.

Chief Spera responded that the citizen is indigent and because the Department does not have a policy regarding indigence, the decision was made to not charge the citizen for his requests.

### 6. Fuel Station

Chief Spera informed the Commission that the temporary fuel station was now open and that the ground breaking for the fuel station was the previous Tuesday. Chief Spera explained that the fueling station had complete underground power and that the left over gas from Main Street had been transferred to the new location. Once this location is no longer needed for the Police Department, this temporary fueling location will

become permanent for the Fire Department with a new tank purchased by the Fire Department and Ambulance Association.

Commissioner Savino asked if the site is locked.

Chief Spera replied that the site is padlocked.

Commissioner Sparaco asked how many gallons of fuel had been extracted from Main Street.

Chief Spera responded that approximately 1,180 gallons had been extracted from the Old Police Building.

#### 7. Awards and Promotional Ceremony

Chief Spera informed the Commission that the Department would be holding an Awards and Promotional Ceremony this Sunday at 11:00AM at the Old Saybrook Middle School and that all Commissioners are welcome to attend.

Chief Spera added that Dispatcher Spinelli will remain out for an illness related to the birth of her new baby. She will be unavailable until May. Chief Spera also noted that backfilling Dispatcher Spinelli and Patrolman Ziolkovski has had a tremendous financial impact on the Department's budget.

#### V. Executive Session – Interview candidates for the Position of Patrolman

**Commissioner Dunlap made a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of interviewing candidates for the position of Patrolman. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stuart. The motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against. Chief Spear and Lieutenant Roche were invited to participate in the session.**

**The Commission entered into Executive Session at 7:51**

**The Commission exited Executive Session at 9:03PM**

**Patrolman Candidate Dean Corriveau entered into Executive Session at 8:03PM**

**Patrolman Candidate Dean Corriveau exited Executive Session at 8:21PM**

**Patrolman Candidate Neal Ayotte entered into Executive Session at 8:23PM**

**Patrolman Candidate Neal Ayotte exited Executive Session at 8:39PM**

#### VI. Executive Session – Interview candidate for the Position of Patrol Sergeant

**Commissioner Maselli made a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of interviewing candidates for the position of Patrol Sergeant. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stuart. The motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against. Chief Spera and Lieutenant Roche were invited to participate in the session.**

**The Commission entered into Executive Session at 7:23**

**The Commission exited Executive Session at 7:49PM**

**Patrol Sergeant Candidate Larry Smith entered into Executive Session at 7:29PM**

**Patrol Sergeant Candidate Larry Smith exited Executive Session at 7:42**

**Commissioner Maselli made a motion to promote Patrolman Larry Smith to the position of Patrol Sergeant, with a start date to be determined by the Chief of Police. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sparaco. The motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against.**

#### VII. Executive Session – For the purposes of discussing issues related to collective bargaining

**Chief Spera and Lieutenant Roche were invited to participate in the session.**

**The Commission entered into Executive Session at 9:35PM**

**The Commission exited Executive Session at 9:46PM**

**VIII. Discussion and Possible Action on an appointment to the Position of Patrolman**

Commissioner Stuart made a motion to hire Patrolman Candidate Neal Ayotte with a start date to be determined by the Chief of Police. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dunlap. The motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against.

**IX. Discussion and Possible Action on the establishment of a Patrolman hiring list**

Commissioner Stuart made a motion to not establish a hiring list. Chairman Finch seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against.

**X. Discussion and Possible Action on an appointment to the Position of Patrol Sergeant**

This item was discussed during Agenda Item VI: Interview Candidate for the Position of Patrol Sergeant.

**XI. Correspondence**

Chief Spera informed the Commission that there was one letter from a resident with regards to replacing a missing stop sign. The issue will be added to Public Work's list.

**XII. Comments from the Public**

There were no comments from the public.

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

Chief Spera thanked the Commissioners for their work during the hiring and promotional process. He stated that the Commission made excellent decisions that would enhance the Department. Chief Spera then stated that he would like to begin working with the Commission on some big picture issues like establishing entry level requirements for the Patrolman position and determining the town's fee structure for golf cart permits and parking violations. Chief Spera stated that Department's parking fines are too low and that the fines should be raised to be consistent with other shoreline towns.

Chairman Finch asked if the parking fine conversation had come from the Parks and Rec Department.

Chief Spera responded that no formal recommendation has been made by the Parks and Rec Department but that it is a topic of conversation that frequently comes up.

Chairman Finch asked if the Parks and Rec Department has a recommendation for a price.

Chief Spera responded that the Department would develop a recommendation for the Commission to consider. He added that he would likely recommend raising the fine level to be consistent with other shoreline communities.

**XIV. Comments and/or Concerns from Commissioners**

Commissioner Dunlap asked if there was available CAD Data for the Commission's review.

Chief Spera replied that CAD Data is being captured but the data is currently in its rawest form. Chief Spera elaborated that some of the technical issues with the system needed to be worked out and that a meeting with the vendor needed to take place so that specific reports could be designed so that the Department and Commission can evaluate only the data they are interesting in reviewing.

Commissioner Dunlap asked if there will be an additional cost to develop custom reports.

Chief Spera replied that there is still some time left on the contract with the vendor, which can be used to develop custom reports. Chief Spera added that Director Coco will be used to sort through the extensive data and develop the reports that can best capture the work of the Department.

Chairman Finch asked how often a fourth call for service comes into the Department when the three officers on duty are already responding to a call for service.

Chief Spera replied that the new Dispatching software automatically prioritizes calls to ensure that the most emergent cases are dispatched the necessary resources. Chief Spera also warned about the dangers of data mining by saying that the CAD Data can help streamline the organization but the data does not dictate the operation.

Commissioner Dunlap asked if the Chief's contract is up for renewal this year.

Chief Spera replied that his contract never comes up for renewal. He added that he is currently in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of his contract and that there is a five step salary structure, but his contract does not expire at the end of the fiscal year. The only change is that after five years the Commission can vote to increase the Chief's salary based on his annual review.

Commissioner Dunlap stated that based on his interpretation of the March Meeting Minutes, the Police Commission is not the place for members of the public to provide feedback about the Police Department.

Chairman Finch replied that the issue is not so clear cut. He iterated that the Department has a formal complaint procedure, which should be followed and will rise to the Commission level if need be. He also stated that citizens should not hesitate to submit letters to the Commission with regards to their impressions of the Department, both positive and negative.

Commissioner Dunlap responded by saying that the Commission does not have the authority to be proactive in terms of soliciting opinions about the service provided by the Department. For example, surveys should not be conducted.

Chairman Finch again stated that the issue is not that simple and that even if the Commission did conduct a survey, they would have no authority to enforce the results.

Chief Spera added that the Commission could hire a consultant to conduct a management study of the Department. He noted, however, that the study could reveal issues that the Department would have to put the town on notice for, such as lack of certified and support staff. Chief Spera concluded that he would be more than happy to cooperate with a management study but would insist on the results being followed and enforced by the Commission and the Town.

Commissioner Dunlap stated that some people are intimidated to bring their complaints to the Police Department. He stated that no one should feel that way but some people do and he wants these people to feel free to speak their mind.

Chairman Finch stated that he would be happy to speak to someone about a complaint.

Chief Spera advised against that action because if the complaint were to rise to a disciplinary hearing then the Chairman would be unable to participate in that procedure.

Vice Chairman Savino stated that the Commission should not go on a fishing expedition and that there is a formal process for complaints and grievances that the public should follow.

Commissioner Stuart added that the Police can't do anything if people aren't willing to call and discuss their problems.

Chairman Finch agreed by stating that if people want to be taken seriously they need to step up and be recognized.

Chief Spera concluded that he takes his job seriously and if he believed that there was a problem with an officer or group of officers, he would be proactive about the situation. He asked the Commission to continue to have faith in his leadership and to remember that everyone has bad days but during difficult economic times members of local and state government can become easy targets for taking out frustration. He asked that the Commissioners encourage any citizens with an issue to come to the Department and speak with him about their problems.

## **XV. Adjournment**

**Chairman Finch made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Savino. The motion to adjourn the meeting passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 0 against.**

*The next regular Police Commission meeting is scheduled for April 28, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.  
in the First Floor Conference Room, Old Saybrook Town Hall.*

The meeting minutes for March 24, 2014 were prepared and respectfully submitted by:

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Trent Gerbers  
Records Clerk for the Old Saybrook Police Commission