



# POLICE COMMISSION

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MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
BETHEL POLICE COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY, OCT 17, 2012  
BETHEL POLICE DEPARTMENT-CONFERENCE ROOM

ATTENDING: CHAIRMAN NICHOLAS ELLIS  
COMMISSIONER DAN GROSSO  
COMMISSIONER CHRIS MCCOLLAM  
COMMISSIONER MIKE DUFF  
CHIEF JEFFREY FINCH

ABSENT: VICE CHAIRMAN HUGO GRECO

Chairman Nick Ellis opened the meeting at 6:01 p.m.

1. General Public Comments

Ann Cleary of 2 Eagle Rock Hill Rd presented a rebuttal to the Chief's response to her citizen complaint presented at the last meeting. Chairman Ellis accepted the rebuttal promising Ms. Cleary that she would be invited should a special meeting be necessary to consider it.

2. Review of Past Minutes for 9/19/12

Comm McCollam, in reference to 9/19/12 minutes #5a "New Business", stated that the transition from one road under discussion to three was not made clear. The commissioner seconded the motion based upon two additional roads, namely Chestnut Ridge and Mansfield needing the same solution. Motion by Comm McCollam to accept the amended minutes of the 9/19/12 meeting; seconded by Comm Duff – unanimous.

First Selectman Knickerbocker stated that he heard from the State concerning Nashville, Chestnut and Mansfield. While Nashville was already under consideration, Chestnut feeds into Redding and Mansfield is close enough to Danbury to concern the State, permission from those two towns would be necessary. Mr Knickerbocker has written to First Selectman N. Ketchum and Mayor M. Boughton and foresees no problem and anticipates their support.

3. Budget Report

Chief Finch stated that overtime is \$5,900 lower than last year-to-date. Corrections were made by the Comptroller on his report concerning the Chief's Salary line item, as questioned by Chairman Ellis (#3 Budget Report, 9/19/12). Chairman Ellis questioned a return of monies item. Chief Finch reported it was 50% of the cost of several bullet proof vests paid for by the Police Union. The remaining 50% was paid for by grant monies.

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Motion by Comm McCollam to accept the budget report as presented; seconded by Comm Duff – unanimous.

4. Old Business

a) Monthly Reports

Chief Finch reported burglaries continue to rise, sexual assaults are down and more cell phone use arrests made. Officer activity is up overall due in part to the effort of Capt Bruckenthal. Comm Duff asked about the preferred door officers open for those locked out of their cars. More expensive damage can potentially be done to driver side doors which carry more wiring for more controls.

Lt Dickinson stated that the old "Slim Jim" is seldom used, instead a thin rod is the "standard issue tool", employed for the same purpose. Comm Grosso commended the Department for even performing this service some towns refuse to do. Lt Dickinson pointed out a practical purpose in addition to providing a public service, namely giving officers practice in opening doors, an action needed in emergency situations involving unconscious and injured people.

Motion by Comm Grosso to accept the monthly reports as written; seconded by Comm Duff – unanimous.

5. New Business

a) Deer Run Estates Subdivision

Chairman Pat Rist of the Planning & Zoning Commission request for Police Commission review of this twelve home development application (formally Old World Subdivision). There is an extension of Starr La. and a dead end road off Country Way called Gabrielle Court. Lt Dickinson sees an insignificant traffic increase arising from the development. Road design constitutes no safety issues. The only complaint is the proposed renaming of the extension. Better to leave the continuation as Starr La rather than changing the name in the middle of the road. Also a stop sign is needed at the end of Gabrielle Ct.

Motion by Comm Duff to accept Lt. Dickinson's recommendation concerning the Deer Run Estates Subdivision request and forward to the Planning and Zoning Commission; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

b) Spring Hill Dead End Sign

In response to a resident's concern concerning signage on a road with hidden drives and children, Lt Dickinson recommended a "Dead End" sign for Spring Hill.

Motion by Comm Duff to accept Lt Dickinson's recommendation for Spring Hill Rd; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous

c) Birch Dr Road Striping

In response to a resident's request for a stop sign to combat cars corning and cutting widely across the road while turning into the Berkshire Industrial Park, Lt Dickinson recommended instead striping the road with one center line containing a segmented section.

Motion by Comm Grosso to accept Lt Dickinson's recommendation; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

d) Maple Ave Speed Sign

In response to residents complaint of northbound speeding on Maple Ave, Lt Dickinson recommended moving the speed sign toward the intersection which would also serve to increase recognition of the "Stop Sign Ahead" sign.

Motion by Comm Grosso to accept Lt Dickinson's recommendation; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

e) 37 Maple Ave Housing

This six unit housing development will have an acceptable sight line as long as the stone wall currently in place is partially removed in compliance with the site plan according to Lt Dickinson.

Motion by Comm Duff to accept Lt. Dickinson's recommendation concerning 37 Maple Ave Housing development and forward to the Planning and Zoning Commission; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

f) Sharon CT 20mph Speed Sign

Lt Dickinson's recommendation addressing residents' complaint about Sharon Ct being used as a cut through is to post 20mph speed signs on Bethpage with other recommendations to be offered next month. The State Traffic Commission has softened on its previous 25mph speed limit requirement. Sharon Ct is an "old fashioned family neighborhood" and the 20mph speed limit is appropriate according to the lieutenant.

Motion by Comm McCollam to accept Lt Dickinson's recommendation; seconded by Comm Duff – unanimous.

g) Keep Right Sign – Taylor & Plumtrees

Residents pointed out problems with signage and want to move "Keep Right" (of island) back from its present location. In response to Comm McCollam's question concerning sign design, Lt Dickinson stated that just moving the existing sign would be sufficient.

Motion by Comm McCollam to accept Lt Dickinson's recommendation concerning moving the sign; seconded by Comm Duff – unanimous.

h) Sympaug Signage

Lt Dickinson stated that the signage at the intersection of Sympaug and Rt53 is not correct for the location. A "Keep Right" sign would be more appropriate. Intersection redesign was also discussed.

Motion by Chairman Ellis to change the sign on Sympaug; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

Chief Finch asked that 4 items be added to New Business:

Motion by Chairman Ellis to add Old Lantern Dr as item 5i; St Mary's road race as item 5j; Department Vehicle plan for this budget year as item 5k; and new and revised general orders as item 5l; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

i) Old Lantern Dr

The request from the developer of a three family home subdivision on Old Lantern and Roberts Dr. forwarded by the Planning and Zoning Commission,

concerns his inquiry of the Commission's preference whether to maintain a cul-de-sac or create a connection between the two roads. Lt Dickinson stated that a connection would create a de facto short cut for traffic which would "degrade the quality of life" for the existing residents. Comm McCollam would ask P&Z whether extending Old Lantern further south would be beneficial so extra long driveways would not be needed for the new houses.

Motion by Comm Grosso to send to Planning & Zoning the recommendation to keep the cul-de-sac and not connect the two roads; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

j) St Mary's Road Race – 5K & 10K

St Mary has solidified their plans and in consultation with Capt Bruckenthal agreed to the hiring of five officers in four hour blocks to be paid for by the event. Given the planned route, the Commission discussed the proper number of officers needed at an event such as this.

Motion by Comm McCollam to accept Capt Bruckenthal's recommendation for the St Mary's road race; seconded by Comm Grosso – unanimous.

k) Department Vehicle Plan

Chief Finch along with Capt Bruckenthal presented the options concerning vehicle needs given the aging fleet and Ford's change in cruiser models. The costs are more than has been budgeted because of the higher than anticipated cost of vehicles and the need to purchase that equipment which is not compatible between the discontinued Ford Crown Vics and the new Ford Interceptor. Capt Bruckenthal detailed many of the technical problems involved adding the fact that planned replacement of the unmarked fleet was not given the priority of the marked fleet. As a result 2004, 2005 and 2007 vehicles are in daily use. The Chief proposed leasing the required vehicles, two to be marked and three to be unmarked. Leasing has received the Comptrollers tentative approval. To obtain five cars in this manner, the \$76K budgeted amount for vehicles would also have to be stretched by \$10K which the Chief proposed to obtain by asking the Commission's permission to approach the Finance Board with the request that \$10K of the \$65K collected this fiscal year from the \$20/hour fee charged for the use of police vehicles on extra duty jobs be transferred from a General Fund account to the Police Capital Equipment account. The Commission discussed with Chief Finch and Capt Bruckenthal various alternative financing options. The Chief stressed the need to obtain and evaluate the new vehicles then reevaluate the entire fleet before a budget request can be drawn up for the next fiscal year. Chairman Ellis argued that only the budgeted amount should be used for purchase or lease. Comm Duff stated he would like to see the "vehicle inventory as healthy as possible" down the road when fiscal challenges could be even greater than that of today. Comm McCollam agreed as long as those dollar amounts are allowed for in next year's budget.

Motion by Comm Duff that the Commission instruct Chief Finch to approach the Board of Finance for the transfer of funds to accommodate the purchase of vehicles; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

l) Revised General Orders

2012-3 Uniform Patrol Overtime Hiring

A new order concerning dispatcher overtime and the seniority rotating list.

Motion by Comm McCollam that 2012-03 dated 10/15/12 be accepted as presented; seconded by Comm Grosso – unanimous.

2012-01 Patrol Operations

Combines and replaces old policies. Basic description of what officers on patrol should be doing.

Motion by Comm McCollam that 2012-01 dated 10/15/12 be accepted as presented; seconded by Comm Duff – unanimous

2012-02 Motor Vehicle Operation and Care

How to operate police vehicles with due care, routine, extra duty and private vehicles. What is required under law, seat belts, carrying passengers etc.

Motion by Comm Duff that 2012-02 dated 10/15/12 be accepted as presented; seconded by Comm Grosso – unanimous

2008-01 Sexual Assault

A revised policy with updated wording, some due to recent cases. Clarification of responsibilities

Motion by Comm Duff that 2008-01 dated 10/15/12 be accepted as presented; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous

2006-14 Roll Call

On-time directive, minor language changes, probationary officer assignment to day and evening shift for a full four month bid. No rights to permanent sector assignment

Motion by Comm Duff that 2006-14 dated 10/15/12 be accepted as presented; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous

1999-03 Department Firearms

Revised policy directing armory responsibility to lieutenant of Support Services, qualification with firearms and establishing inspections

Motion by Comm Grosso that 1999-03 dated 10/15/12 be accepted as presented; seconded by Comm Duff – unanimous

6. Correspondence

a) Police Academy

New officer candidate report card

b) Danbury States Attorney

Letters of appreciation for offs Christos and O'Farrell

c) Paramedic Letter

Letter concerning off Whaley

7. Chief's Report

• Training Report – Monthly

Monthly report was in the hands of Commissioners.

• Dispatch Opening

Starting a new Dispatcher. Dispatcher Shuttleworth has quit and is going to Westport for better pay and benefits

• Off candidate Sam Brown has not passed qualifications. Bill May is the next selectee

• Jim Wright is trained in polygraph analysis. Chief Finch discussed the ongoing discussions with the Comptroller and First Selectman concerning the handling and distribution of the fee charged for this service.

8. Commissioner Comments

Comm Duff asked about Taylor and Nashville Rd parking (see 9/19/12 minutes #8 Commissioner Comments). Lt Dickinson's proposed solution was creating a sight line 10 feet back from the intersection with "No Parking in Front of Sign". If this patch of Town owned land is totally barren, cars tend to zoom through the intersection without stopping. Comm McCollam detailed the traffic light configuration on Grassy Plain and Greenwood in front of the carwash as still presenting a problem. Also the State traffic engineers should have striped the crosswalk at the curb cuts and installed crossing buttons on the South St/Rt53 intersection for pedestrians noting the many children crossing the intersection for school buses. Comm McCollam also stated that the \$229K collected for the use of police cars on special duty jobs since 2006 should have been earmarked for the Police Vehicle account rather than going into the General Fund. If this could be done in the future, vehicles could be taken out of the budget as a line item. Comm Grosso stated that most people would probably willingly pay the extra taxes necessary for new police vehicles. Chairman Ellis stressed the difference between the Department's wants and needs, and its effect on those struggling financially in these challenging economic times.

At 8:35 motion by Comm Duff to adjourn; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,



Ferdinand Miller Jr

Secretary