



POLICE COMMISSION

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MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
BETHEL POLICE COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20, 2007
BETHEL POLICE DEPARTMENT-CONFERENCE ROOM

ATTENDING: CHAIRMAN NICHOLAS ELLIS
COMMISSIONER ANDREW MATTURRO
COMMISSIONER HUGO GRECO
COMMISSIONER CHRIS McCOLLAM
COMMISSIONER EDWARD ROBINSON
CHIEF JEFFREY W. FINCH

RECEIVED

JUL 12 2007

TOWN OF BETHEL
TOWN CLERK

Chairman Nicholas Ellis opened the meeting at 5:05 p.m.

Comm Maturro asked that his absence from the 5/16/07 meeting indicate that he was told the meeting was cancelled due to the storm. The fact that the cancellation was to be rescinded and the meeting held, never reached him.

1. General Public Comments:
None
2. Review of Past Minutes May 16, 2007:
Motion by Comm Robinson to accept the regular meeting minutes of 5/16/07; seconded by Comm Greco – unanimous.
3. Budget Report:
With the end of the fiscal year approaching, overall spending is less than last year according to Chief Finch. The highest categories were Communication Dispatch overtime at \$60,000 and investigation overtime at \$53,000. Motion by Comm Maturro to accept the budget report as presented; seconded by Comm Robinson – unanimous.
4. Old Business:
 - a) Monthly Reports
Commissioners considered the reports. Comm McCollam noted the drop in arrests from last year-to-date. Comm Robinson drew attention to this year's DWI arrests being noticeably down. Motion

by Comm Maturro to accept the monthly reports as presented;
seconded by Chairman Ellis – unanimous.

Motion by Chairman Ellis to add extra roads to the Extra Duty List as Old Business item b; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

Chief Finch asked that Dunkin Hume – Bethel letter be added to Correspondence. Motion by Chairman Ellis to add Dunkin Hume – Bethel to Correspondence as item f; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

b) Additional roads to be added to Extra Duty List

For the benefit of the Commissioners who were not sitting when the initial extra duty list was constructed, Chief Finch reviewed its history starting in 2000 when it was determined that it was in the public interest to have officers assigned to certain roads in town when work was being performed when it was necessary for a contractor to disrupt traffic or close a lane. Often the flagmen's vested interest is not with the public but rather with the contractor. The emphasis with this original list was to position officers on main thoroughfares carrying a large volume of traffic with the expectation that the officer's concern is with the traveling motorist and the Town. The problem has been the lack of cooperation with contractors and authority to enforce the requirement and the unavailability of officers to work extra duty. The issue, according to the Chief, is "appropriate service to the public" in deciding which roads need a police officer. A criteria needs to be established. Chairman Ellis sees safety and the need to provide motorists with detour information as important. An out-of-town flagman may not have local knowledge. Comm Maturro drew on his experience with the Town Dept, pointing out that dangerous roads can be identified which need a police officer directing traffic and a police car. A list of roads was passed out to Commission members. New additions were negotiated between Sgt Bruckenthal and Chairman Ellis. Added roads at the last meeting were Beach St, Blackman Av, PT Barnum, Sand Hill Rd, Sky Edge Dr and Vail Rd. An Additional compromise was large projects and projects 25 to 30 feet from major intersections. Chief Finch objected to listed roads and distances from intersections arrived at by deals, negotiation or compromise. "What is in the best interest of the public" should be the main consideration. Requiring the hire of police officers for major projects, such as the Stony Hill Sewer project should be left to the discretion of the Chief and the Captain. Chief Finch sees no valid reason for adding any of the listed additional roads because they are not major thoroughfares carrying a large volume of traffic.

Only if the scope of a project on a unlisted road impacts a listed major road should police officers be hired. Capt Cedergren stated that he is often not able to fill the jobs. Every road added to the list gives officers the opportunity to “cherry pick” for the lesser road as opposed to the major. No mechanism currently exists which allows management to reshuffle extra duty manpower. Two union members were in attendance. Sgt Bruckenthal sees safety as the primary concern. No officer may be available but at least the intent to provide public safety is genuine. Sgt Libertini underlined the fact that a contractor’s flagman lacks the authority of a police officer. Tickets have been written for motorist disobedience. Comm McCollam favored using the counter to determine actual traffic volume on roads in question. Comm Robinson favors looking at the list at least every five years because of changes in traffic patterns. Chief Finch will document in writing the approach he and Capt Cedergren will take in making their decisions. Motion by Chairman Ellis to add wording that any major construction projects on the roads of Bethel that affects the roads on the current extra duty list requires the hiring of extra duty officers, with the discretion of the Chief and the Captain; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

5. New Business:

a) Tazer Use

When approached by the School Resource Officer a year ago for permission to carry and if necessary use a tazer in a school environment, Chief Finch stated he at first denied the request. Since that time the School Superintendent and Principal after having attended a tazer demonstration presented the Chief with a letter supporting its use in schools. In light of their request Chief Finch stated he now has no objection and is making the Commission aware of this issue because of potential public concern. The Police Commission was unanimous in their approval of the carry and use of tazers in schools by the SRO.

6. Correspondence:

a) Tanglewood Manor

In this letter residents of Tanglewood Manor complained about noise emanating from the Second Meeting House on Main St and the Masonic Temple on Greenwood Av when these facilities are rented out for social events. The request is for an enforceable noise ordinance. Chief Finch pointed out that equipment measuring decibel level is expensive and is designed for industrial sites and not residential neighborhoods. Motion by Comm McCollam that the Commission send a letter to the Board of

Selectmen stating its support in crafting a noise ordinance to alleviate the situation; seconded by Comm Matturro – unanimous.

b) Martin Ryan – Bethel

In this letter Sgt Mackenzie, Off Olmstead and Off Cordero received compliments for their handling of a automobile accident complaint.

c) Edith Sanford – Redding

Thanked Sgt Mackenzie for help with a flat tire at the Big Y.

d) Stacey Bland – Bethel

e) BHS Stacey Kaye

Discussed at 4/18/07 meeting.

f) Duncan Hume – 10 Weed Rd

Due to its narrow and winding nature, Weed Rd should be posted “No Thru Traffic” at both ends according to this letter. The Commission asked that Lt Dickinson look into this matter and report back at the next meeting. Lt Dickinson expressed interest in studying this road for the requested and alternative solutions.

Comm Greco left the meeting at 6:05.

f) Chief's Report:

Chief Finch reported on his experience at the FBI Academy during the last ten weeks. Comm McCollam asked about the possibility of other officers attending. A window of opportunity opens only every four to five years according to the Chief although last minute openings can occur at any time.

a) New Hire

After clarifying a few items in the background investigation, Chief Finch asked that Frank O'Farrell be considered by the Commission as a “worthy candidate to be hired”. Comm McCollam asked that an overview of investigation details be discussed in executive session.

b) Accreditation

Lt Kennedy, in attendance, noted that the on-site CALEA accreditation audit will be held 8/25/07 through 8/29/07. The national assessors will fly in Saturday and begin work on Sunday and finish Wednesday morning. Tuesday afternoon a public forum will be held at the Municipal Center meeting room A. Public comments will be heard, positive and negative about the department, its operation, impact and suitability to have national accreditation. A portion of the time will be allotted for telephone

call-ins. Letters to the national headquarters are also invited. Public officials and Police Commissioners often attend these sessions, speaking about the impact of police operations on the town. Efforts are now on finalizing general orders, arranging the needed documentation and working out lodging and inspection details. The assessment team has been named. There is a Police Chief from North Carolina, a Captain from a Georgia department and a civilian from a Virginia public agency. The lieutenant's request was for Commissioners to make themselves available during the audit process and the public hearing. The auditor's focus is to be able to witness at first hand the Department's operation in order to determine that "we do what we say we do and what we say we do is what they require us to do". The Mock-On-Site analysis in May determined among other things that some modifications to the physical facility will be required in the detention area. Experience from other departments show the initial "on site" audit to be more lenient than later reaccreditation audits where deficiencies as discovered, must be fixed. Lt Kennedy complimented Off Heather Burns for her part in getting the orders and documentation in place. Once the facility is up to CALEA standards the audit should go well. In response to Chairman Ellis' question concerning the setting up of meetings, the lieutenant stated that a public information plan has been sent to the national office stating the planned advertisements and public notices for the public hearing. The intention is to get the public, hopefully favorably involved. Comm McCollam asked for a "sheet" of dates and times for inclusion in the July Commission meeting. Chairman Ellis promised the Commission's full cooperation. Chief Finch thanked Lt Kennedy and Off Burns for the work done on this project. Also the work of Capt Cedergren, instrumental in needed orders under the pressure of accreditation. Additionally Chief Finch thanked Capt Cedergren for his "exemplary" performance and attentiveness to detail as Acting Chief while he was attending the FBI Academy. Chairman Ellis echoed these congratulations. Capt Cedergren stated that Lts Kennedy and Dickinson made the job easier.

8. Commissioner Comments:
Discussed after executive session.

9. Executive Session: Applicant Interviews
At 6:28 pm motion by Chairman Ellis to go into executive session to discuss the Frank O'Farrell hire and invite Chief Finch, Capt Cedergren and Lt Kennedy to attend; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

The Commission came out of executive session at 6:42 pm.

Return to Commissioner Comments:

Comm Robinson commented that he received a complaint from a neighbor concerning a call made to the Department. The Chief will look into it.

Comm Maturro commented that he is still concerned and expressed displeasure about the May Commission that was cancelled and then held without notifying him last month. There was several minutes of open discussion amongst the Commissioners on this issue.

At 6:56 motion by Chairman Ellis to adjourn; seconded by Comm Robinson – unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ferdinand Miller Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Ferdinand Miller Jr.

Secretary