



POLICE COMMISSION

49 Plumtrees Road, Connecticut 06801 • Phone: (203) 743-5500 • Fax: (203) 748-1333

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
BETHEL POLICE COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, APR 21, 2010
BETHEL POLICE DEPARTMENT-CONFERENCE ROOM

ATTENDING: CHAIRMAN NICHOLAS ELLIS
COMMISSIONER CHRIS McCOLLAM
COMMISSIONER BILL OCHS
COMMISSIONER HUGO GRECO
CHIEF JEFFREY W. FINCH

LATE (6:50): COMMISSIONER DAN GROSSO

Chairman Nicholas Ellis opened the meeting at 6:34 p.m.

1. General Public Comments:
None
2. Review of Past Minutes Mar 17, 2010
Motion by Comm Greco to accept the minutes of the 3/17/10 meeting; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.
3. Budget Report:
Chief Finch reported overtime as being \$9,200 below last year-to-date. Comm Greco asked about comp vs overtime policy in other departments. In Newtown, according to the Chief, per policy and contract an officer cannot take comp time if it causes overtime. Chairman Ellis questioned why a large travel and investigation dollar amount, associated with serving an out-of-state extradition warrant, came out of Professional Services and not the Training and Education line item. Lt Dickinson, in attendance, stated that being so rare, there is no specific account for this type of expense and the Professional Services account was more appropriate to expend from. Rather than drain other accounts with several months to go in the current fiscal year, the money was taken out of Professional Services. The Travel Account is strictly training related. Line item categories as established by the Comptroller are meant to be broad. Chairman Ellis asked about the new server and storage array. The non grant portion for this computer hardware will show up as an April bill according to the Chief along with the two new patrol cars. Motion by Comm Greco to accept the current budget report as presented; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

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4. Old Business:

a) Monthly Reports

The Chief noted the fatal accident this past month. The previous fatal was last year and one before that in 2004. The Commission considered the reports. Comm McCollam complimented the use of color to high light pertinent data. Motion by Chairman Ellis to accept the Monthly Reports as presented; seconded by Comm Ochs – unanimous.

b) Bethpage Dr Survey

This item was carried over from the October 2009 meeting. It still needs to be taken up with the Board of Selectmen. Chairman Ellis stated that until funding is available for projects such as a speed bump, dollars will be spent on what is absolutely needed. Comm McCollam suggested sending a letter to the original complainant stating that while there is still interest, no funding is available at this time. Comm Greco asked about relative prices. The price of a temporary speed bump is about the same as a permanent one. The commissioner went on to ask if selective enforcement or the placement of the radar trailer could be used in the meantime.

c) Comp Time report

This item was held over from the January meeting. Comm McCollam asked that comp time continue to be monitored at least until the end of the current fiscal year, especially now that summer “dirt jobs” are coming up. Motion by Comm Greco, on recommendation of the Chief, to hold this item until the end of the current fiscal year by putting it on the July meeting agenda; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

Motion by Comm McCollam to add MS Society Bike Ride to New Business as item (h); seconded by Comm Greco – unanimous.

Motion by Chairman Ellis to add Financial Subcommittee to New Business as item (l); seconded by Comm Greco – unanimous.

5. New Business:

a) Department Policy

Several changes to 2004-04 Criteria for Promotion were offered for Commission approval. The changes concerned the weights for the criteria used namely written exam, oral exam, seniority and personnel evaluation. Comm McCollam questioned why the list of applicants is fixed for only two years and not three. Chief Finch believes a two year list is “fresher” by allowing the Department to consider new people and allows those who initially scored low to

improve their standing at the next hiring cycle. Motion by Chairman Ellis to approve proposed changes in 2004-04 Criteria for Promotion; seconded by Comm Greco - unanimous.

b) Judd Av Traffic

Elisa Volpati and Mark Goodwin of 21 Judd Av sent a letter to the First Selectman and the Chief of Police requesting a 3-way stop intersection at Judd and Whittlesey citing problems they have backing out into traffic and noting the sudden transition from a fairly wide to a narrow road and the need for better signage at the entrance to the Educational Park. Lt Dickinson reported that a similar request was studied a few years ago with the traffic counter being employed (peak volume 750-800 cars per hour). At the time the suggestion was made to the complainant to pull out rather than back out into traffic. In the last 3 ½ years there was only one motor vehicle accident in this area and it was not related to right-of-way issues at the intersection. The intersection is safe according to the lieutenant. Legal stop sign installation, justification requirements known as a "stop sign warrant" have to be met before any stop sign installation. Such a case cannot be made at the Federal or State level. A road showing a low accident rate can have that number quickly increase by the installation of stop signs since the number one cause of accidents at intersections is "rear ending". Other improvements at this area can be made in lieu of stop signs such as improvements for pedestrian safety, striping to reduce the width of the road, and improved and better placed school signage on Judd. Stop signs at Judd and Whittlesey would serve to back up traffic during slippery road conditions on the Judd Av hill and direct more traffic which normally use Judd, down Whittlesey where schools and elderly housing are located. Motion by Chairman Ellis to leave Judd Av Traffic under Old Business for the next meeting to give Lt Dickinson a month to look at alternative solutions; seconded by Comm Grosso – unanimous. Chief Finch will correspond with the complainant.

c) Fleetwood Av Traffic

In a letter of complaint to the First Selectman, the complainant stated problems of Fleetwood Av traffic from Danbury crashing and continuing towards the house. The current 4 inch posts have not contained or redirected errant vehicles. Lt Dickinson studied the area and determined that a guardrail is needed. Guardrails are safer than home remedies since their "give" results in less injury to drivers and damage to vehicles. Homeowner solutions usually center around the positioning of rocks and trees which are non yielding and cause more injury. At this point, given Commission approval, this becomes an "engineering issue" as to effective guardrail type and design. Motion by Comm McCollam to authorize

Chief Finch to send a letter to the First Selectman recommending guardrails at this location; seconded by Comm Greco – unanimous.

d) Network Support Personnel Disclosure

Chief Finch read a letter of disclosure (attached Addendum) concerning the use of his son for occasional network support. This results in considerable savings to the Town. Other network support firms are employed as well such as Network Synergy. Motion by Comm Grosso to approve Jeffrey Finch Jr to continue to do network support service; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous.

e) Police Reports.us on-line

This commercial firm puts motor vehicle accident reports online for fee based public access. The Department would receive an authorized \$2.00 and Police Reports On-Line would receive \$5.00. The public would still retain the right to obtain a copy at the police department for 50¢ per page. The Chief's request is to enter into a contract with the company offering this service. Motion by Chairman Ellis to authorize Chief Finch to enter into a contract with Police Reports On-Line to put accident reports on line; seconded by Comm Greco – unanimous.

f) CT Challenge Bike Ride 7/24/10

This ride, routes at 75 and 100 miles, arrives via Rt53 from Redding, north on Nashville to Chestnut, to Maple, to Plumtrees, Old Hawleyville on into Brookfield. The ride will run through Bethel between 8:00 am and 10:30 am. This has been run before without problems according to the Chief. Motion by Comm McCollam to approve the CT Challenge Bike Ride for 7/24/10; seconded by Comm Ochs – unanimous.

g) 2009 Year End Report

The Chief noted problems in getting statistical data from the State. The last full year of State statistics is 2006. The trend for crime, state and national is slightly up for violent crime and larceny and flat to down in most other categories.

h) MS Society Bike Tour 6/13/10

This ride is also a repeat from past years held without problems. The route is from Rt53 Redding, to Rt302 to Rt58 and back into Redding. Motion by Chairman to approve the MS Society Bike Tour for 6/13/10; seconded by Comm Greco – unanimous.

i) Financial Sub Committee

This proposal by Chairman Ellis for a two person sub committee to preapprove finances rather than simply approving them after the fact. Chairman Ellis emphatically stated this proposal does not reflect any allegation of wrong doing but rather a means of the Commission being "better informed". The Board of Education and other agencies, according to the Chairman, has subcommittees for such preapproval. Salaries and contracted issues would be the only items exempt from the proposed review. Chief Finch asked about routine items such as the daily purchase of office supplies. Comm Grosso stated that a dollar amount can be applied depending on the item type, requiring a review only if that amount is exceeded. Chief Finch asked about contracted services. Chairman Ellis stated that emergency issues aside, this too could be "decided upon on a weekly basis". The printout of past purchases for the Commission's approval is troubling for the Chairman. In response to the Chief's question of whether any past purchases would not have merited approval Chairman Ellis stated that there were cases in which he would indeed have questioned items as to whether they or alternatives were more important to purchase. The economy, according to the Chairman, necessitates purchasing items "we need" rather than what "we want". It would be up to the Chief to "sell" the subcommittee on the importance of proposed purchases. Without "further study" or "further guidelines" not supplying needed equipment until meeting with a subcommittee according to the Chief, would "hamstring" the Department's daily operation. The reason for the yearly budget process is to create "broad categories" of where money is needed and how it is intended to be spent. The responsibility of the Commission in this case is to point out any "inappropriate" or erroneous expenses. Buying things we need now, such as a laptop computer before the fiscal year runs out would eliminate the need to list it on next years budget according to the Chairman. He sees it as better to "take 18 months of money and spread it out". "Finding different ways to spend certain monies" is the goal according to Chairman Ellis. Scanners or new light bars for cars could be a better purchase than pole mounted radar machines. Defibrillators rather than paint ball guns or speed bumps would be another way. While freedom exists to make some changes, budgets are drawn up with concepts as to how money will be spent according to the Chief. Most police departments operate this way and the job of their commissions is to be sure the money is spent in a reasonable manner. Using the Comptrollers monthly print out, the motion to approve acknowledges commissioner awareness of how the money is being spent. Comm McCollam feels that Commission members should all be in weekly touch with Department management and as a result already be aware of needs and anticipated expenditures. The

Department works to the line items of an approved budget. While not agreeing with the subcommittee idea, Comm McCollam stated a detailed plan of the proposal including parameters was needed. The Comptroller and Town Purchasing Agent already have the fiduciary responsibility to oversee how the police budget is spent. Comm Greco favored the establishment of spending guidelines and limits. Comm McCollam suggested consulting the Town Attorney to see if, under the Town Charter, the Commission is responsible for money spent or even allowed to approve Department expenditures. The Town Charter does not mention finances according to Commissioner McCollam stating, in this area of Town Charter, that the Commission's duty is to prepare an annual budget for submission to the Board of Selectmen. Chairman Ellis stated his understanding that "annual budget" refers to monies. His intention was to bring this item up for discussion in this meeting and again next month. Motion by Chairman Ellis to have Financial Subcommittee tabled and put under Old Business next month and in discussion with Department brass to come up with a plan for next month's meeting; seconded by Comm Greco – unanimous.

6. Correspondence:

a) Memorandum ICAC

A memorandum of understanding between the Department and the State concerning the CT Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. Signed a year ago, the update in the hands of the First Selectman, has been signed by him.

b) Exchange Club, Officer of the Year Sgt Mackenzie

The State dinner will be 5/6/10 at Aqua Turf and the Danbury Exchange club dinner at Anthony Vespucci Lodge 5/13/10

c) Letter from Francis O'Neil, 54 Taylor Av, complimenting police response to a 4/1/10 fire in Overlook Park. The police officers fought the fire with fire extinguishers until the Fire Dept arrived, in this way preventing a wider conflagration.

7. Chief's Report

a) Training Report

Lt Kennedy's training report was in the hands of the Commission.

8. Commissioner Comments:

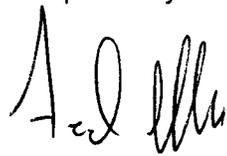
Comm McCollam complimented both the police and firemen at the fatal accident this past month. Everyone worked very well together.

9. Executive Session
At 8:25 motion by Chairman Ellis to go into executive session and invite Chief Finch to attend; seconded by Comm Greco – unanimous.

At 9:04 the Commission came out of executive session.

At 9:05 motion by Comm Greco to adjourn; seconded by Comm McCollam – unanimous

Respectfully Submitted

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

Ferdinand Miller Jr.

Secretary

Addendum



BETHEL POLICE DEPARTMENT

JEFFREY W. FINCH ♦ CHIEF OF POLICE

April 20, 2010

Commissioners:

For several years I have been using my son to perform occasional work on our computer network. I found this to be very helpful as it was expedient (*at the time*) and has proved valuable because of his numerous credentials, his availability and the cost savings to the department. It also enabled me to get (*free*) straight unbiased answers (*which at times is hard to come by*) whenever I needed direction or advise with reference to what "needed" to be spent concerning infrastructure and design. In addition, at \$75 an hour he is half the price of all others and he accomplishes more in an hour then others.

Years back I filed this type of letter of "disclosure" with the Police Commission and obtained their approval and filed disclosure letters with the First Selectman, Mr. Curina and the Town Clerk. Also a few years back (2006) we reviewed this and I petitioned you to raise the fee from \$50 an hour to the \$75 it is today. I know that you are knowledgeable of this and it has met with your approval, nonetheless it has been several years so I felt it appropriate to again seek your continued formal approval.

Jeffrey W Finch Jr, represented by the company name of **IT Integrity** is performing limited computer network services to the Police Departments computer system at a cost of \$75 an hour.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey W Finch".

Jeffrey W Finch
Chief of Police

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