



POLICE COMMISSION

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MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
BETHEL POLICE COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2010
BETHEL POLICE DEPARTMENT-CONFERENCE ROOM

RECEIVED

2010 JUN 21 A 10:45

TOWN OF BETHEL
TOWN CLERK

ATTENDING: CHAIRMAN NICHOLAS ELLIS
COMMISSIONER BILL OCHS
COMMISSIONER DAN GROSSO
CHIEF JEFFREY W. FINCH

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER HUGO GRECO
COMMISSIONER CHRIS McCOLLAM

Chairman Nicholas Ellis opened the meeting at 6:11 p.m.

1. General Public Comments:
Mr. Goodwin and Ms. Volpati of 21 Judd Ave, in attendance on behalf of the Judd Av issue (see minutes 5/19/10 4b), asked for a clarification on the definition of a school zone.
2. Review of Past Minutes May 19, 2010
Motion by Chairman Ellis to accept the minutes of the 5/19/10 meeting; seconded by Comm Grosso – unanimous.
3. Budget Report:
Chairman Ellis questioned the overtime portion of the dispatch salary account. Motion by Comm Ochs to accept the current budget report as presented; seconded by Comm Grosso – unanimous.
4. Old Business:
 - a) Monthly Reports
Comm Grosso questioned the fluctuation in the Criminal Arrest Totals report. Warmer weather causes more people to be out and about according to the Chief. In the Year-To-Date Activity Report Comm Grosso questioned the wide difference in officer activity. Various factors come into play according Chief Finch. A situation may arise in a given month wherein an officer makes several arrests. A quarterly or yearly average is a better indicator than single months. Also important is the activity levels of various shifts. There are Individual situations such as vacations, temporary assignments and the like. Some officers write a lot of tickets and

others do not. Motion by Chairman Ellis to accept the Monthly Reports as presented; seconded by Comm Ochs – unanimous.

b) Judd Av (from May)

Chief Finch notified the Commission of the letter received from First Selectman Matthew Knickerbocker concerning the Judd Av school crossing issue. The Chief went on to state that since last month's meeting Judd Av was studied by Lt. Dickinson along with himself, the First Selectman and the Superintendent of Schools, making trips to the area at different times of day. Lt. Dickinson in his presentation, included a virtual tour of the area pointing out roadway features and deficiencies in current signage. Data collected just south of Whittlesey Drive on Judd Ave shows 6000 vehicles a day with near 800 per hour at peak times. Mean average speed was 20MPH with an 85th percentile speed of 33MPH. With only one minor single car accident in 3 ½ years the safety record is excellent. Gaps in traffic for pedestrians to cross are adequate at 107 at peak hour, 60 or less being problematic. Speeds are reasonable and there are no traffic backups. Problems at the intersection are not due to excessive speed but the limited sightline to the hillcrest on the north side. A pedestrian not seeing cars approaching and starting to cross (using child & elderly crossing rates) at the south (far) side of the intersection (222 feet from the hillcrest) would cross paths with a car coming over the hillcrest at the 85th percentile speed of 33MPH (48 feet per second) before they made it halfway across the 44 foot wide road. This location on a hill is not a good location for a marked crosswalk. The preferred crossing location is at the RT 58-RT 302-Judd Av intersection with the traffic light and marked crosswalk. Two other areas used by students to cross, shown on video, are the nearby hillcrests on both sides of the Whittlesey Dr & Ann Terrace intersections, where there are only 2 directions of traffic to contend with and where there are long distance views of approaching traffic. Marked crosswalks here would not be effective as drivers would not see them well due to the hill, and giving right-of-way preference to pedestrians where gaps are sufficient, would decrease safety. Marked crosswalks give pedestrians a false sense of security and do not automatically improve safety, studies showing 3.6 times more pedestrians hit in similar marked versus unmarked crossing areas. Stop signs cannot by law be installed for speed control, and if placed on Judd Av at Whittlesey Dr. where there are no right of way conflicts, no flow delays, and a low crash history, will increase collisions. It will inconvenience 6000 drivers a day, reduce gaps in traffic for residents trying to exit driveways and exiting Ann Terrace and hinder pedestrians crossing other than at the intersection. It will stop traffic just over the hillcrests, and on the hill in winter. As a result more through traffic will use Whittlesey Dr which runs past

the schools, playing fields, and an elderly housing project. Lt. Dickinson recommends against installing stop signs there. Positive recommendations include installing new bright green school crossing signs just prior to the hillcrests where students tend to cross, posting legal 25MPH speed limits, removing excess and distracting signage such as those for fraternal organizations, moving the Judd Av. sign so it can be seen by RT58 traffic, requesting the state add a RT58 end sign on the RT302 sign at the intersection, selective enforcement, and to advise public works to consider improving the access to the lower hillcrest crossing area. Ms Volpati asked again about flashing light school zone signs. Chairman Ellis said that the Commission can revisit this request if traffic studies show the proposed solutions are not working. Chief Finch weighed in on the need for the installation of school crossing signs to clearly mark Judd as being part of a school zone. Being at the crest of a hill, it would be difficult for drivers to see an actual crosswalk. A preferred crossing area delineated by school crossing signs is the better alternative. A discussion took place about the meaning of the school pedestrian crossing symbol sign, not well known to many drivers who view it as just a pedestrian crossing sign and as it is not visually apparent to them. There is a need to more clearly communicate to drivers that this is a school zone by adding a word sign as well. Motion by Chairman Ellis to accept Lt. Dickinson's recommendations and also to add new school zone signs replacing the existing ones in each direction; seconded by Comm Ochs - unanimous.

5. New Business:

a) Department Policy (5)

Chief Finch presented five updated policies to the Commission, explaining the changes and clarifications.

2000-12 "Bomb Complaints". Motion by Comm Ochs to approve changes to 2000-12 "Bomb Complaints"; seconded by Comm Grosso – unanimous.

2003-04 "Rules of Conduct". Motion by Chairman Ellis to approve changes to 2003-04 "Rules of Conduct"; seconded by Comm Grosso – unanimous.

2004-08 "Interviews, Statements & Miranda". Motion by Comm Grosso to approve changes to 2004-08 "Interviews, Statements & Miranda"; seconded by Comm Grosso – unanimous.

2005-01 "Arrests". Motion by Comm Ochs to approve changes to 2005-01 "Arrests"; seconded by Comm Grosso – unanimous.

2007-09 "Missing Persons". Motion by Comm Grosso to approve changes to 2007-09 "Missing Persons"; seconded by Comm Ochs – unanimous.

b) Budget 2010-2011

Chairman Ellis notified the Commission that the First Selectman and the Board of Finance in a joint meeting made cuts to three specified line items of the 2010-2011 budget. The overall total is \$9,550. Chief Finch has already addressed the areas in which he will make the cuts as directed.

6. Correspondence:

a) Mr Cirreard – Off Dirago

Letter complimenting off Dirago for recovering the family dog.

b) Cpl DeLuca – States Attorney Sedensky

On 6/9/10 Det Cpl Ralph DeLuca received the Linda Newby Professional Service Award from the Danbury Area Regional Child Advocacy Center. The award reflects Det DeLuca's work with Bethel's youth as well as successful child abuse investigations. The award was nominated and presented by Danbury State's Attorney Steven Sedensky.

c) Memorandum Matthew Knickerbocker – First Selectman

In this letter the First Selectman, after conferring with the School Superintendent expressed his concern with school zone traffic in the area of Judd Av and Whittlesey Dr.

7. Chief's Report

a) Training Report

Lt Kennedy's training report was in the hands of the Commission. Sgt Kaluta, Sgt Mackenzie, Cpl Pugner were mentioned as attending courses important for first line supervisory leadership.

8. Commissioner Comments:

None

At 8:10 motion by Chairman Ellis to go into executive session and invite Chief Finch to attend; seconded by Comm Ochs.

At 9:00 motion by Chairman Ellis to adjourn; seconded by Comm Ochs – unanimous

Respectfully Submitted


Ferdinand Miller Jr.

Secretary