

MINUTES OF THE POLICE COMMISSION MEETING
of
Thursday June 14, 2018

Commissioners Present: Charles Knoche, Chairman
George Kain, Secretary
Marianne Coffin
Joseph Savino
Stephen Saloom

Also Present: Chief John Roche

These minutes are an overview of the meeting; not a verbatim text.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm by Chairman Knoche.

Agenda Item #1 – Agenda Review

Chairman Knoche stated that he would like to move Beaver Brook Road 5c) to Agenda Item #1a). Chairman Knoche stated that he would like to move Rockwell Road 6e) to Agenda Item #1b). Commissioner Savino motioned to amend the agenda; Commissioner Coffin seconded the motion.

Vote: In Favor – All

Agenda amended.

Chairman Knoche stated that there would be an Executive Session for personnel matters following the public session.

Agenda Item #1a) Beaver Brook Road

Chairman Knoche stated that several residents of the Beaver Brook/Chipmunk Lane area were in attendance due to the traffic problem that has developed at this location over the past few years. Chairman Knoche read a letter sent by the Beaver Brook Road residents and a letter from a resident on Chipmunk Lane to establish a base knowledge of the current traffic dilemma.

The residents would like to work on a resolution to the explosion in the volume of vehicles traveling on their road due to drivers' usage of the Waze and Google navigational apps. Vehicles traveling to and from I84 are told to use the Beaver Brook Road as a shortcut, thereby creating upwards of triple the volume of vehicles that normally travel on this road which is a rural road not equipped to handle this increase. As pointed out by one resident, the number of pot holes on the road is a testament to the toll on the roads by this increase which then creates additional funding for the Town to repair same. Also pointed out was the fact that in addition to the safety hazard created to residents of the road who cannot walk safely in their neighborhood, they have had near-collisions with drivers unfamiliar with the narrow, winding road and even though unfamiliar, travel over the speed limit. A figure of 100 cars per 15 minute timeframe was given as an

example of the volume that these residents are dealing with, occurring primarily between 4pm and 7pm daily and if there is an accident on I84, it will occur until the accident scene is cleared which can be at any time of the day/night.

The Commissioners listened to several residents who voiced their concerns – residents who have lived in this Ridgebury Estates development for over twenty years – and stated that they understand their issue and agree that, although many areas of Town are confronted with traffic problems, this intrusion on a rural community is excessive.

The use of a *No Thru Traffic* sign was suggested, closing off the road except for local use only was suggested, installing speed humps was suggested. Chief Roche stated that the Commission would have to obtain State approval for any type of signage. He stated that no one can stop people from using a public road and if you close off one area, the cars will just go onto another road to create the same problem. Chief Roche stated that although the Police Commission is the Legal Traffic Authority for Ridgefield, they operate under the auspices of the State Traffic Administration and have to abide by their rules. We can suggest/request but we cannot just arbitrarily make changes. Chief Roche stated that he would not put up a sign that is not enforceable which would be the case if we do not have approval to install such sign.

Chief Roche stated that he does not believe that we can eliminate this problem but maybe we can find a way to alleviate the intrusion.

Chief Roche stated that he will have his Traffic Sign Officer contact the State to obtain feedback on closing off a road and to see if they have any suggestions.

Chief Roche addressed the issue of center lines on the roads. A resident had noted that there were no lines on the road so that drivers unfamiliar with the road did not always stay in lane. Chief Roche stated that the Department has requested on two occasions to be allowed to use a single yellow line on our rural roads as there is not enough room to place a double yellow line – we were denied our request both times.

Chief Roche stated that the State does not approve speed humps in response to the suggestion of installing same.

Chief Roche suggested placing signs before entering Ridgebury Estates stating the best route to take to New York would be George Washington Highway to Ridgebury Road; best route to Danbury would be Ridgebury Road to George Washington Highway.

Chief Roche stated that he directed the Speed Trailer be placed at this location and provided some statistics for the week of June 4-8. The trailer was located at Beaver Brook Road near the intersection of Chipmunk Lane, monitoring eastbound traffic from 0800 hours on Monday (6/4) to 1900 hours on Friday (6/8). There were 254 vehicles counted per day with an

hourly Evening breakdown of: 1600-1700 hrs. = 23/day, 1700-1800 hrs. = 55/day, 1800-1900 hrs. = 26 per day (Total = 94/day).

Speed counts from the trailer were as follows: 6 vehicles a day travelled between 36-40mph, 24 vehicles per day travelled between 31-35mph, 32 vehicles per day travelled between 26-30mph. There were no vehicles traveling above the 36-40mph threshold.

Chief Roche reported that on June 12th, an Officer posted on Beaver Brook Road reported on westbound traffic: 96 vehicles from 1545-1900 hours, highest speed 36mph – average speeds were between 26-30mph with 5 cars going above 35mph.

Commissioners Saloom and Savino stated that they will make an on-site visit to Ridgebury Estates to familiarize themselves with the area and better understand the logistics. Commissioner Savino also informed the audience that a request for a traffic study for the Town was submitted as part of the Police budget but was not approved. The purpose of this study would be to help the Town recognize and try to avoid issues such as this occurring in Town. He stated that we will keep trying to get this study approved.

Commissioner Kain requested someone be a contact person for the group. A name and number was taken by Chief Roche and he will update this person who will keep the other residents up-to-date when any information is obtained.

Those in attendance thanked the Commissioners for listening to them and hope that something can be worked out to assist them with this traffic issue.

Rockwell Road/Perry Lane

Previously, a request was received regarding placing a *Stop* sign on Rockwell Road at Perry Lane due the steep embankment and blind turn existing there. Traffic Sign Officer Caswell reported that the primary reason for denying this request is that *Stop* signs cannot be used as speed control devices. He also reported that he conducted a survey of the area on May 30, 2018 and that due to the curves, sight lines and topography of the area, it is unsafe to place *Stop* signs at this intersection.

Chief Roche will speak with Traffic Sign Officer Caswell about the feasibility of placing some type of signage to alert drivers and, in turn, make it safer for the residents on the road. He realizes the hills distort the line of sight making it hazardous for anyone walking.

A public relations campaign was suggested stressing the message of keeping your neighborhood safe, control your speed, etc. This could be presented at parent nights in the schools, at Town events, store fronts, etc.

Chief Roche will follow-up and will be in contact with the resident.

Agenda Item #2 Minutes

Commissioner Savino motioned to accept the minutes of the Ridgefield Police Commission on May 10, 2018; Commissioner Coffin seconded the motion.

Vote: In Favor – All

Minutes of the May 10, 2018 Police Commission meeting accepted as written.

Agenda Item #3a Commission Voice Mail/Email

Commissioner Kain reported that the Commission voice mail was checked and there were the following messages:

- Concern when exiting Florida Hill Road onto Ethan Allen Highway where trucks are speeding on the roadway. This was checked by the Traffic Sign Officer and is included in his sign report (Agenda Item#4).
- Concern about cars parking (and being instructed to park) on Silver Spring Road by a blind curve. This issue will be brought to the attention of the Zoning Board – Richard Baldelli will follow up on this.
- Report of missing *No Parking* signs on Sunset Lane. This is addressed in the Traffic Sign Officer's sign report (Agenda Item#4).
- Request from two residents for mirrors to be installed to assist them with exiting their driveways. This is addressed in the Traffic Sign Officer's sign report (Agenda Item#4).
- Request to remove a street light. Contact was made by Chief Roche and this issue will be handled by the Town and Eversource.

Agenda Item #3b Written Correspondence

- A letter was received by a resident expressing a traffic safety issue with bicyclists who race on the Town roads and ignore all the "rules of the road". He states that they ignore the lights, signs, do not ride in a single line, pass on the right when a vehicle is turning right. He is requesting Officers spend some time, especially on weekends, issuing warnings or tickets to offenders.
Chief Roche stated that he will have his Public Relations Officer post this issue on Facebook and will have him go to the Ridgefield Bicycle store to speak with the owner who is involved with bike events and reinforce the necessity of bikers obeying the rules of the road and sharing the road.
- Chief Roche stated that he received a set of plans for a proposed Multi-Unit Contractor's Yard at 800 Ethan Allen Highway. The plans will be at Headquarters if any Commissioner would like to review them. Chief Roche stated that he did not see any big issues with the submitted plans.

Commissioner Coffin, at the suggestion of Commissioner Savino, requested that we waive the reporting of the Statistics, Training and Public Relation/Community Relations reports as the Commissioners had hard copies of them. Chief Roche agreed.

Agenda Item #4 Chief's ReportDanbury Christian Community

Chief Roche reported that he was invited and attended a breakfast hosted by the Greater Danbury Christian Community and was presented with a plaque expressing gratitude and appreciation for dedication to safety and service to the neighborhood on behalf of the citizens of the Greater Danbury Community.

Thank You

Chief Roche reported that a letter was received thanking P.O. Luis for his assistance to visitors to Ridgefield during the macro-burst storm in May when roads were blocked and trees were down. Officer Luis was noted for his help in escorting the visitors to their destination.

Sign ReportFlorida Hill Road

A resident of Florida Hill Road requested that additional signs be placed at the bottom of Florida Hill Road to warn large trucks of the narrow road ahead.

Traffic Sign Officer Caswell reported that he told the resident that he would contact the State DOT to see if it was possible to place signage on Route 7 (State road) warning large trucks not to turn onto Florida Hill Road or Cains Hill Road but to continue to Branchville Road as seeing the signage after they make the turn is too late for them to make any corrections. It seems that GPS systems are directing trucks to turn onto both Florida Hill Road and Cains Hill Road.

Traffic Sign Officer Caswell will update the resident if the DOT will be able to assist.

Cains Hill Road and Cedar Lane

A resident on Cains Hill Road and a resident on Cedar Lane inquired about placing mirrors across the street from their driveways to assist them with viewing on-coming traffic.

Traffic Sign Officer Caswell advised them that they needed to obtain permission from the affected property owner before mirrors were installed and that the installation would be their responsibility.

Grove Street/Prospect Street/East Ridge Road

Traffic Sign Officer Caswell reported that the pedestrian crossings at the above locations were reviewed on May 30, 2018 and he recommends that:

1. All four *Stop* signs will be upgraded with *Reflective Strips* on the posts.
2. *Crosswalk Ahead* sign with *Reflective Strips* be installed on Prospect Street.

3. *Crosswalk* sign will be placed at the crosswalk on Prospect Street. 'Call Before You Dig' will clear the area before any work can begin. It is anticipated that the signage will be installed in June.

Bailey Avenue

At the request of a business owner on Bailey Avenue who expressed concerns regarding the increase of wrong way traffic on Bailey Avenue, Traffic Sign Officer Caswell surveyed the area on May 11th. After his review, Traffic Sign Officer Caswell recommends:

- a) Install an additional *Do Not Enter* sign and two (2) *Wrong Way* signs, facing East, down Bailey Avenue.
- b) Install a *No Left Turn*, facing South, coming out of the Thrift Shop parking lot.
- c) Install two (2) *No Right Turn* signs, facing North, coming out of the Municipal lot.

In addition to the review by Officer Caswell, Sgt. Durling conducted six (6) traffic details to monitor the parking lot exits on Bailey Avenue. He reported that he observed no violations in the times he monitored the area.

Signs – repaired/replaced

- Installed *Neighborhood Watch* sign on Oak Knoll.
- Repaired a *Slow School Zone* sign on Prospect Ridge Road.
- Replaced and repaired two (2) *Stop* signs and two (2) *4-way* signs at High Ridge Road and Peaceable Street.
- Repaired two (2) *Stop* signs at Grove Street and Prospect Street.
- Replaced the *Stop* sign at High Ridge Road and King Lane.
- Replaced the *Stop* sign and installed a *Reflective Strip* at Grove Street and Sunset Lane.
- Replaced the *Stop* sign and installed a *Reflective Strip* at Old Quarry Road and Grove Street.
- Replaced a missing *No Parking* sign on Sunset Lane.
- Straightened the *25MPH* speed limit sign on Sunset Lane.
- Replaced the *25MPH* speed limit sign on New Road.
- Replaced the *Stop* sign on Ramapoo Road.
- Replaced a *25MPH* speed limit sign on Ramapoo Road.
- Installed an *Arrow* sign and a *15MPH* sign on Mulberry Street.
- Replaced the *Stop* sign at Nursery Road and Still Road.
- Replaced the *Stop* sign at Nursery Road and Limekiln Road.
- Repaired the *Stop* sign at Wooster Street and North Street.
- Installed additional *Do No Enter* and *Wrong Way* signs on Bailey Avenue.
- Installed *No Left Turn* sign on Bailey Avenue.
- Installed *Curve Ahead* and *25MPH* speed limit signs on Rockwell Road.

Old Sib Road

Chief Roche reported that a resident voiced her objection to actions taken by the Ridgefield Police Department during the macro-burst storm in May when they were notified by Town Highway of a vehicle impeding clean-up and her son's car was towed.

Seeing that this called attention to an Officer's call response, Chief Roche felt it important to get the facts out there as to the Officer's true attempts taken to locate the vehicle owner. The initial report submitted stated that Dispatch was unable make contact by phone so Officer Van Wattum was dispatched. He reported that he was unable to make contact at the home, 260 Old Sib Road; the house was dark and it looked like no one was home.

After this incident appeared in the Ridgefield Press, Chief Roche requested Officer VanWattum to write a detailed Supplemental Report providing a step-by-step account of his actions on that day.

Officer VanWattum reported that upon his arrival, he observed:

1. A vehicle was in the driveway with downed telephone and power wires on top. Officer shined his vehicle spot light into the upstairs of the house to alert the family of his presence.
2. Officer exited cruiser, jumped over the wires and walked down the driveway where there was a generator in front of an open garage door and another vehicle parked in the driveway. Thinking this meant someone was home, Officer then walked under a tree that had fallen onto the house and knocked on the front door, yelling "Ridgefield Police".
3. While walking around the residence, Officer was looking into windows to determine if anyone was home and possibly get their attention. No one was seen in the home.
4. Officer then drove to where the vehicle that was called in was parked.
5. Officer determined that the vehicle was in the way of clearing the road and would most likely get damaged if left in the manner that it was parked; tow company was then called.

Chief Roche stated that Officer Van Wattum did a good job in trying to contact the registered owners.

Route 35 Resurface

Chief Roche reported that he received correspondence from the State DOT regarding the upcoming repaving of Route 35 in the area of the new bridge and the Ridgefield Recreation Center. Chief Roche stated that at this time, there are silver delineator strips in place across from the Recreation Center entrance in order to prevent vehicles from going around vehicles waiting to make a left into the Recreation Center. State DOT is asking if we want to keep the delineator strips as is or would we prefer to have a "by-pass sliver" created at this point to allow traffic to flow when a car is waiting to make a

left turn. The Commissioners discussed this issue and noted that this could pose a problem for people exiting the Recreation Center making a left being delayed and also a problem of them being seen by someone going around the standing vehicle waiting to make a left entering the Recreation Center. The Commissioners agreed that they believe the sliver would be the best way to go. Chief Roche reported that there will be a pre-construction meeting on June 26th and Captain Terzian will attend to voice the Town's preference for a sliver to be created at this location.

State DOT Pedestrian Sign Project

Chief Roche reported that he received correspondence from the State DOT regarding the upgrading, enhancing and installing of pedestrian crossing signs at uncontrolled crossing locations on locally owned roadways to which we agreed to participate. Chief Roche verified with the Commissioners that they will be going with fluorescent yellow green sign with a post delineator. This will now be forwarded to the State DOT for an anticipated start date of Spring 2019.

Agenda Item #5a – Update of Chief's Goals

1) **Departmental Staffing**

Chief Roche reported that we are at full staff – authorized budgeted strength of 40. Could we use more? Yes.

2) **Traffic and Roadway Safety**

Work with the Board of Selectmen on funding a new traffic study. Conduct a thorough analysis of data to determine areas of high accident rates and, through education and enforcement, focus the Department's efforts to improve safety. Be proactive and coordinate with the State agencies to improve traffic safety in Ridgefield.

This was rejected in the budget process.

3) **Department Training**

Continue to participate in current and emerging training programs, schools and conferences for all Police Department personnel to ensure continued high level of professionalism of the Department. **On-going**

4) **Community Partnerships**

Maintain communication and partnerships with Town departments, Boards, Commissions, Committees, the RCCASA Group, local businesses and schools. Develop a specific focus on improving substance abuse education and prevention across the community and in schools, including improving upon DARE program offerings. **On-going**

5) **Central Dispatch**

Chief Roche reported that he attended a Board of Selectmen meeting and Jacunski Humes Architects were on the agenda. This firm is experienced in Public Safety Facility design. Mr. Humes presented his project and the Board is looking at it – have not made any decisions.

Mr. Humes did state that if chosen, he would prepare his own design and then would look at what we already have. **On-going**

6) **Police Headquarters Upgrade and Renovation**

Continue pursuit of building. **On-going**

RPC Sub-Committee: Commissioner Kain, Retired Commissioner Lecher

7) **Professional Development**

Chief Roche will attend the FBINAA Conference in Canada in July.

8) **Police Officer Survey**

Continue the annual Officer feed-back survey process. **October**

9) **Fair and Impartial Policing**

All members of the Police Department attended training involving fair and impartial policing; Police Commissioners were also included in this class.

COMPLETE

10) **Physical Fitness**

The Chief of Police shall continue to participate in the Department's Voluntary Fitness program.

Agenda Item #5b – PBA Fundraiser Letter

Tabled to the July meeting.

Agenda Item #5c – Beaver Brook Road

Covered under Agenda Item 1a.

Agenda Item #5d – Botvin Life Skills

June 18, 7pm Lifeskills webinar. Chief Roche reported that Major Brown will participate in this webinar as he (Chief Roche) will be on vacation.

In discussing the introduction of Botvin to Ridgefield, Chief Roche stated that he will look at the program and what it offers but he does feel that our present fifth grade program is very good and has received very good feedback. Chief Roche stated that although we call it the DARE program, we do use some of the aspects of DARE but we have evolved our own program and the SRO's have incorporated Digital Futures Initiatives into the middle school program which they have tailored to focus on the needs of our community in the fields of citizenship, relationships and substance use.

Commissioner Saloom (who had suggested a look at Botvin) stated that he is just following the research and research says that Botvin works while DARE has no demonstrative impact. Commissioner Saloom stated that he would like to help in this matter in whatever direction we decide to take as it is important to him.

Chief Roche stated that it is important to all of us as we want to offer the best to our students. Chief Roche stated that knows our fifth grade program is good and the SRO's have shaped the middle school program to meet the intellectual abilities of the students and provide relevant lessons focusing on real time issues. Chief Roche stated that Botvin will be taken into consideration, discussed and then a decision will be made.

Agenda Item #6a Main Street**Main Street (Fountain) Traffic Light**

Previously, Chief Roche stated that in the response to the resident requesting a traffic light at the location of the fountain, the resident was informed that Rep. John Frey would be contacted to research the history of the fountain – is it on the National Registry for Historic Places.

Chief Roche reported to the Commissioners that he has not received any correspondence from Rep. Frey as of this June meeting.

Agenda Item #6b Bailey Avenue

At the request of a business owner on Bailey Avenue who expressed concerns regarding the increase of wrong way traffic on Bailey Avenue, Traffic Sign Officer Caswell surveyed the area on May 11th.

After his review, Traffic Sign Officer Caswell recommends:

- a) Install an additional *Do Not Enter* sign and two (2) *Wrong Way* signs, facing East, down Bailey Avenue.
- b) Install a *No Left Turn*, facing South, coming out of the Thrift Shop parking lot.
- c) Install two (2) *No Right Turn* signs, facing North, coming out of the Municipal lot.

In addition to the review by Officer Caswell, Sgt. Durling conducted six (6) traffic details to monitor the parking lot exits on Bailey Avenue. He reported that he observed no violations in the times he monitored the area.

Agenda Item #6c No Turn on Red**Prospect Street/Main Street, Danbury Road/Grove Street**

Chief Roche reported that this is part of the Main Street Renovation project. No updates or communication has been received from the State DOT on this issue as of the June meeting.

Agenda Item #6d St Mary Crossing

Previously, Chief Roche reported that he received an email from David Sawicki of the State DOT confirming receipt of the proposal for installation of a crosswalk on High Ridge Avenue at Catoonah Street. Mr. Sawicki stated that the request has been forwarded to the Division of Traffic Engineering for their review and response.

Chief Roche stated that a report is being completed and will be emailed to him; Frank Fowler, Project Engineer, was notified.

Chief Roche had submitted a request to Eversource to replace the existing utility pole at the location of the proposed crosswalk. He will contact them again to see if there is any update on this request.

Agenda Item #6e Rockwell Road

Covered under Agenda Item 1b.

Agenda Item #6f Headquarters

On-going item.

Commissioner Saloom motioned to adjourn to Executive Session for personnel matters; seconded by Commissioner Kain.

Public Session adjourned at 9:17pm.

Public Session commenced at 9:30pm.

A motion was made by Commissioner Coffin to grant Lt. Michael Gates' request for an extension of his retirement date; seconded by Commissioner Kain.

Vote: In Favor – All

Lt. Gates granted extension of his retirement date.

Commissioner Saloom motioned to adjourn the Public Session; seconded by Commissioner Kain.

Vote: In Favor – All

Public Session adjourned at 9:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Commissioner George Kain
Secretary

**MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE SESSION OF THE
POLICE COMMISSION MEETING
of
Thursday June 14, 2018**

Commissioners Present: Charles Knoche, Chairman
George Kain, Secretary
Marianne Coffin
Stephen Saloom

Also Present: Chief John Roche

Executive Session commenced at 9:17pm.
Executive Session adjourned at 9:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Commissioner George Kain
Secretary