

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL POLICE COMMISSION MEETING
of
Monday, April 17, 2017

Commissioners Present: Joseph Savino, Chairman
Charles Knoche, Secretary
Thomas Reynolds
Marianne Coffin
George Kain

Also Present: Chief John Roche
Major Stephen Brown

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Chairman Savino.

Agenda Item #1

Chairman Savino requested a motion to change the Agenda by moving Agenda Items 5b (SRO Report) and 6a (Uniform Update Discussion) to the top of the agenda. Commissioner Reynolds motioned to amend the agenda; Commissioner Coffin seconded the motion.

Vote: In Favor – All

Agenda changes approved.

Chairman Savino stated that there would be an Executive Session for personnel matters following the Public Session.

Agenda Item #6a Uniform Update

Chief Roche stated that the proposed uniform change would be from grey to blue with 14K gold trim as opposed to the deep yellow trim currently used. The dress uniform would remain the same – grey.

Chief Roche stated that the current hat style would be the same but it would be in blue with a maroon stripe.

The material used in the new uniform would be a wool/poly blend that wears well and is comfortable.

The trousers would be the same wool/poly blend with hidden pockets on each side and would be year-round pants. The trousers presented had a maroon and gold stripe along the side length of the pants.

Most of the new uniform items would have the collar brass, name, and American flag embroidered on them; the jackets and coats have the badge embroidered on them.

The standard shirt is a Smart shirt with Velcro closures and zippered front; ties (maroon) would still be worn in Winter, without vest carriers.

Officers will be required to wear a vest over their shirt which can be easily removed when indoors.

After presenting the updated uniform changes to the Commissioners, the Officers' (majority of Officers attended this meeting) Union Representative, Officer Christopher Daly, offered some feedback. Officer Daly stated that for several years now, 70% of the Officers have requested a uniform change – not just for looks or color, but for functionality also. Officer Daly stated that the Officers are okay with the shirt and outer vest but have an issue with the stripe on the pants and the mandatory tie. Officer Daly stated that the Officers like the proposed trouser with the hidden pocket but without the stripe. He added that many of the Officers did not realize there was a stripe on the side of the proposed trousers; they feel that this is antiquated and unnecessary.

After some discussion on this issue, a show of hands vote of the Officers present made it clear that the stripe was not wanted. Chief Roche stated that he would agree to adhere to the Officers' wishes and forego the stripe on the pants.

Officer Daly stated that the Officers have an issue with the need to wear a tie. Officer Daly pointed out to the Commissioners that when you have the tie on and put the outer vest over it, it just does not look good. After discussion, it was agreed that ties can be worn while on desk duty or covering Dispatch and a mandatory bullet proof vest policy will be put into effect.

Commissioner Knoche motioned to accept the proposed uniform changes as presented with the exception of no stripe on the daily trouser pants. Commissioner Kain seconded the motion.

Vote: In Favor – All

Uniform Changes accepted as proposed except for removal of the stripe on the proposed trouser pants.

Agenda Item #5b SRO Report

Captain Kreitz, who oversees the School Resource Officers (SRO), stated that the SRO Officers: SRO Luis, SRO Giglio and SRO Daly are an asset to the Department; he has had no negative feedback regarding the SRO Program and in addition to being involved in the school and school activities, the Officers also extend themselves to the Boys and Girls Club to actively participate in their Kids and Cops program.

SRO Luis stated that he has been the SRO at the high school for many years in addition to covering St. Mary School and the Ridgefield Academy. He is available to students and faculty throughout the day, he greets students in the morning and sees them off at night, participates in class if requested, teaches Health and Law which he explained introduces scenarios to students such as; if a party is announced and alcohol is going to be there – do you go?

The students offer feedback and the pros and cons are examined and discussed. SRO Luis also goes on a road trip with students – will be going to the Bridgeport Correctional Center; introduces forensics with the aid of Officer Murray and K-9 Loki, interacts with counselors.

Commissioner Savino asked if alcohol was more prevalent today. SRO Luis stated that every class body has its percentage of problems but he has not seen an increase in alcohol use in the schools.

Commissioner Coffin asked about testing for alcohol and SRO Luis stated that breathalyzer checks are performed but not at sporting events as there is too much congestion. In those instances, there is an increase in security details. Commissioner Savino asked if K-9 checks at the high school are preannounced and SRO Luis stated they are not. Parking lot checks are planned and carried out a few times a year and no one is allowed to leave the school grounds during a check. Locker checks are performed after student hours two to four times a year.

Commissioner Kain stated that many people tell him that anything is available at the school, everyone knows who to go to and they text information back and forth (in relation to drugs/alcohol). SRO Luis responded that he just does not see it. The school is visually monitored inside and the parking lot, hall monitors walk the halls, Deans walk the halls and he is always on guard. If something unusual does occur, it can be tracked and dealt with but it is not the norm.

SRO Luis stated that he can vouch for on-school activity but after school, he is not aware of what occurs.

Commissioner Coffin stated that the Internet offers the opportunity to purchase fake ID's and SRO stated that, unfortunately, that cannot be stopped.

SRO Giglio stated that he has East Ridge Middle School, Branchville, Farmingville and Veterans Park schools. SRO Giglio teaches DARE and is a constant presence at the schools. Teachers will contact him for assistance and he will help with school topics such as Bill of Rights or Search and Seizure. He conducts lock-down drills, walks the halls, checks bathrooms, greets students and has good relationships with the student body/teachers. In response to Commissioner Coffin's question, SRO Giglio stated that security is adequate at his schools and the biggest problem is cyber bullying.

SRO Daly stated that he finds the bonding with the students the best. SRO Daly stated that he remembers alcohol and drugs being a major problem when he was in school but he does not see it now - kids are too busy with school, after school, sports – which he thinks is a good thing.

In response to the Commissioners' questions, the SRO's stated that the schools are on top when it comes to security of their students. They have initiated all of the security recommendations since Sandy Hook and were the first to activate Alertus – police alert from the schools. The Department also has school floor plans for all Officers who conduct school familiarity drills.

The one thing that SRO Luis stressed is the cooperation of the parents. Parents need to let the SRO's know when they hear something may be going to happen or have concerns about anything. The SRO's are always ready to listen but they need to be informed. One incident pointed out was the fact that a woman who heard alcohol was going to be at a party with underage youths, let her daughter go anyway! He stated that situations like that can't happen – parents need to step up and help their children.

The Commissioners thanked the SRO's for attending the meeting.

Agenda Item #2

Chairman Savino requested a motion to accept the minutes of the March 9, 2017 Police Commission meeting. Commissioner Reynolds motioned to accept the minutes; Commissioner Coffin seconded the motion.

Vote: In Favor - All
Against - None

Minutes of the March 9, 2017 Police Commission meeting accepted as written.

Agenda Item #3a Commission Voice Mail

Commissioner Knoche reported that there were two voice mail messages. One was from an individual inquiring about an incident and the other was a reporter requesting feedback on the Bailey Avenue parking issue. Chief Roche requested permission to listen to the voice mails and respond to them. The Commissioners granted permission and Commissioner Knoche thanked Chief Roche for his assistance.

Agenda Item #3b Commission Correspondence

Ridgefield Recreation passing lane

Commissioner Savino stated that a resident proposed the possibility of installing a passing lane in the area of the current bridge project, heading North, across from the entrance to the Ridgefield Recreation Center.

Currently, in order to pass vehicles waiting for the opportunity to turn left into the recreation center, vehicles maneuver around the stopped vehicle which takes them onto the grassy shoulder and that has created a sinker hole.

Chief Roche stated that this idea has been suggested and proposed to the State DOT who was negative to the idea. Commissioner Savino requested that the State be approached to fill in the existing hole with some gravel so vehicles do not bottom out. Chief Roche stated that he will contact the State again on this subject and ask them to fill in the hole. Chief Roche will report back to the Commission with an update.

89 Danbury Rd

A proposal for the installation of a 'flashing beacon' at the crosswalk near 89 Danbury Road was received. Pedestrians encounter difficulty when trying to cross at the installed crosswalk due to visibility issues and the 'flashing beacon', which is activated when a pedestrian waiting to cross pushes a button, would alert drivers to the crosswalk and make it easier and safer for pedestrians to cross the road.

The Commissioners agreed that this would be a good addition and Chief Roche will contact the State to pursue this installation.

Summer Sidewalk Sale

Commissioner Savino signed off on an application for State Highway Use for Ridgefield's Summer Sidewalk Sale to be held on July 22, 2017. This application will now be forwarded to the State DOT for approval.

Ridgefield Little League

The Ridgefield Little League is seeking permission to construct a new baseball field at Ethan Allen Highway and Simpaug Turnpike. The proposal denoted above-normal parking requirements to be contained within the ballfield area and not on surrounding roads. The field will be maintained by the Little League and the roads in the area are adequate to handle the expected traffic increase. The Commissioners were in favor of this project and thought it was a good use for this property.

Agenda Item #4 Chief's Report

Statistics

Chief Roche stated that the incident total for the month of March was 1,904. During the month, the Department responded to 73 Alarms, 25 Medical Assists, 14 Foot Patrols, conducted 13 Traffic Details, 8 Radar Details, issued 617 Motor Vehicle Enforcement violations, processed 9 Pistol Permit applicants, investigated 44 Motor Vehicle Accidents, participated in 30 Public Relations interactions; completed 10 Controlled Substance arrests and 4 DUI arrests. There were two K-9 assists in March.

Training

- Det. DuBord attended *Social Media Investigations* class in Meriden.
- Lt. Platt, Sgt. Clarke and Sgt. Gogola attended Domestic Violence – Strangulation.
- P.O. Caswell attended *Sign Installation and Maintenance* in Plainville, Ct.

Crime Prevention Report

- Safety talk to girl scouts at Scotts Ridge Middle School (P.O. Ryan).
- P.O. Caswell participated in the Annual RVNA Spelling Bee contest.
- Safety talk, tour of HQ and showing of cruiser (SRO Giglio).
- Capt. Kreitz and Sgt. Durling attended a meeting at the Boys and Girls Club of Ridgefield regarding a Keystone Club project intended to help facilitate positive relationships between the police and teenagers.
- Safety talk and show cruiser at a local pre-school (P.O. Caswell).
- Tour of HQ and show cruiser for a Cub Scout Pack (P.O. Seibert).
- Safety talk and show cruiser at a local pre-school (P.O. Gjodesen).
- Safety talk and show cruiser at a local pre-school (P.O. Gjodesen).
- Tour of HQ and show cruiser for a Girl Scout Troop (P.O. Shimko).
- A total of three (3) car seats were installed/checked this past month.

Women's Center

Chief Roche reported to the Commission that at a gala held by the Women's Center, they presented the Ridgefield Police Department with an award for all their work done in conjunction with domestic violence. In response to Commissioner Savino's question, Chief Roche stated that the statistics for the Women's Center are located in the domestic incidents statistics.

Senator Blumenthal

Chief Roche reported to the Commission that the Ridgefield Police Department received a *Certificate of Special Recognition* award from Senator Richard Blumenthal for their 'outstanding commitment and dedication to protecting lives and property throughout the Town of Ridgefield'.

Agenda Item #5a Board of Finance

Chief Roche reported that after the Board of Finance meeting on April 4th, they cut the Town budget by \$60,000 and the police department was to cut another \$5,000 from their budget. Chief Roche stated that he reduced the radar line item to \$2,000 to satisfy this request. Chief Roche stated that the Department budget stands at an increase of 00.84%.

Agenda Item #5b SRO Report

Covered at beginning of the meeting.

Agenda Item #6a Uniform Update

Covered at beginning of the meeting.

Agenda Item #6b Main St Project

Chief Roche reported that the issue of parking on Bailey Avenue is being pursued and he has received feedback from the State DOT. The State contacted Casey Fuel who has a tanker truck that accesses Bailey Avenue from Main Street and using that as a guide, parking on Bailey Avenue would not be allowed for the first 55 feet from the manhole on Main Street. Town Engineer Fisher is not in favor of two-way traffic on this road as the curve by Casey Fuel is not wide enough to accommodate two-way traffic and is looking into the parking proposal for Bailey Avenue. This issue will be addressed at the May meeting.

Agenda Item #6c Depot Road

No updates or communication has been received on this issue.

Agenda Item #6d Police HQ Renovation/Expansion

Nothing to report on this issue.

Commissioner Reynolds motioned to adjourn to Executive Session for discussion on personnel matters; Commissioner Coffin seconded the motion.

All in Favor

Public Meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Knoche
Secretary

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EXECUTIVE SESSION OF THE
POLICE COMMISSION MEETING**

Commissioners Present: Joseph Savino, Chairman
Charles Knoche, Secretary
Thomas Reynolds
Marianne Coffin
George Kain

Also Present: Chief John Roche
Major Stephen Brown

Executive Session commenced at 7:51pm.

Executive Session adjourned at 8:08pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Knoche
Secretary