

City of West Haven, CT
Board of Police Commissioners

2023 APR 20 PM 12: 57

Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday, April 18th, 2023

Peter C. Morley
TOWN AND CITY CLERK

The regular meeting of the West Haven Board of Police Commissioners was called to order at 7:04 PM by Chairman Raymond Collins III at West Haven Police Headquarters, 200 Sawmill Road. All those present, rose and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendance

Raymond Collins III, <i>Chairman</i>	Present
Paul E. Butler, <i>Vice-Chairman</i>	Present
John M. Carrano, <i>Commissioner</i>	Absent
Christopher Suggs, <i>Commissioner</i>	Present
Deborah B. Wright, <i>Pension Board Chair and Commissioner</i>	Present
Joseph Perno, <i>Chief of Police</i>	Present
Carl Flemmig, <i>Deputy Chief</i>	Present

Agenda

Commissioner Butler MOVED to add Item 11.3 under Executive Session regarding Personnel; SECONDED by Commissioner Suggs. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Butler MOVED to add Item 8.2 under new business regarding the closure of Wood Street between Washington Avenue and Union Avenue on Saturday, May 6th from 4-9 PM; SECONDED by Commissioner Suggs. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Butler MOVED to accept the agenda as amended; SECONDED by Commissioner Suggs. Motion carried unanimously.

1. Minutes

Commissioner Butler MOVED to accept the previous minutes from the meeting on April 4th, 2023; SECONDED by Commissioner Suggs. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Public Input

Chairman Collins asked three times if any person from the public wished to speak. There being none, he declared the public portion closed.

3. Communications

- 3.1 Animal Control Report – Month of March, 2023.
- 3.2 Attendance Report – Month of March, 2023.
- 3.3 Traffic Management Report – Month of March, 2023.

4. Report of the Chief – No Report

5. Report of the Deputy Chief – No Report

Commissioner Collins asked how many officers the department has available. Deputy Chief Flemmig answered that there are currently 95 available officers, the same number as last meeting.

Commissioner Butler asked about the plan for monitoring the boardwalk. Deputy Chief Flemmig answered that the plan will be the same as last summer with hiring a shore patrol, consisting of a sergeant and three officers. He explained that the shore patrol will begin the week before Memorial Day.

6. Report of the Committees – No Report

7. Old Business - None

8. New Business

8.1 Request – Installation of new stop sign at Washington Ave & Beach Street.

Lieutenant D'Amato explained that there has been a sight line issue with drivers not seeing pedestrians at the crosswalk when they are driving southbound on Washington Ave and turning left onto Beach Street. He explained that the addition of a new stop sign would enhance pedestrian safety when using the crosswalk. He emphasized that the stop sign is not meant to reduce speed in the area, and that it is only meant to make it safer for pedestrians who use that crosswalk.

Commissioner Collins noted that the department should be more vigilant when it comes to parking violations, especially on Washington Avenue and Beach Street. Lieutenant D'Amato replied that they will monitor those parking violations.

Commissioner Butler MOVED to approve the installation of a new stop sign at Washington Ave & Beach Street; SECONDED by Commissioner Suggs. Motion carried unanimously.

8.2 Road closure of Wood Street between Washington Avenue and Union Avenue on Saturday, May 6th from 4-9 PM.

Commissioner Butler MOVED to approve of the road closure; SECONDED by Commissioner Suggs. Motion carried unanimously.

9. Pension Board

9.1 Dave Moran – Raymond James.

Mr. Moran gave brief update on the status of the police pension.

Commissioner Wright asked if her and Mr. Moran will be looking at performance metrics soon. Mr. Moran replied that they can look at the metrics and he mentioned that he projects that money will be added into one of the more aggressive managers who he has a lot of confidence in.

9.2 Russell Kniehl (Ret.) – WHPROA

Russ Kniehl, President of West Haven Retired Officers Association, addressed the board to discuss the pension escalation as it pertains to the post July 1993 hires who are now retired. He explained that this affected group consists of 25 individuals, and that he will continue to advocate for them and for this issue to be resolved as soon as possible.

He emphasized that he believes that the issue with the post July 1993 retirees should not be bundled with the overall pension issues concerning active personnel. He believes that this specific issue is separate and distinct because it specifically has to do with the interpretation of the wording in the clause of the pension plan. He explained that he still has an unanswered question regarding who was responsible for making the decision to not give those affected retirees the benefit.

Mr. Kniehl read aloud the three sentences of the clause of the police pension plan that has been left to interpretation. He explained that there is nothing in the clause that states that those post July 1993 retirees are not entitled to anything. He argued that the interpretation of the language states that those 25 individuals are entitled to that wage increase, which became effective July 2022, almost one year ago. He emphasized that the longer everyone must wait to get this issue resolved, the more complicated it will become, especially with the new pension provision that becomes effective July of this year. It was also explained that himself and the organization feel that they are being stonewalled and that they have been waiting for an answer but have yet to receive one.

He explained that he hopes the issue can hopefully be resolved in favor of the affected individuals. He explained that he hopes those individuals will receive the benefit and that the affect to their pension amount should be retroactive to July 1st. Mr. Kniehl also read aloud an email he received earlier in the day from a retiree that expressed that the issue with the pension discriminates against a small group. It was explained that everyone received the benefit except for those 25 people who did not. It was emphasized that at this point, it's not about the money and that it instead has to do with the principle of the idea of fairness. Mr. Kniehl expressed that he and the organization feel that these affected individuals are entitled to the benefit as well as the retro pay. He also explained that he wants to keep this issue alive and that he would be open to sit down with any of the commissioners to have more conversations.

Commissioner Wright explained that she has been in constant contact with Corporation Counsel, and that per their last conversation, she was told that this issue would be taken care of before the end of the fiscal year. She explained that it is the last quarter of the fiscal year, and that she expects to be hearing back from them soon. She explained that when she hears of more definitive information, she will make sure to let Mr. Kniehl know.

Mr. Kniehl clarified that the money in question with this pension issue has to do with money that comes straight from the pension plan, not any other funds like ARPA.

10. Commissioners Report - None

11. Executive Session

Commissioner Wright MOVED to enter Executive Session to discuss the following:

- 11.1 Michael Towles (Retired) – Supernumerary Position
- 11.2 Matthew Haynes (Retired) – Supernumerary Position
- 11.3 Personnel

The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Suggs. Motion carried unanimously.

The Commissioners entered Executive Session at 7:35 PM.

12. Return to Regular Session/Adjournment

At 8:15 PM, the Commissioners returned to regular session and adjourned by a motion from Commissioner Wright; SECONDED by Commissioner Suggs. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Briana Hojo
Recording Clerk