

**CITY OF WEST HAVEN, CT**  
**BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS**  
*Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday, July 21, 2020*

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

**Attendance**

<b>Raymond Collins, III, Chairman</b>	Present
<b>Paul E. Butler, Vice-Chairman</b>	Present
<b>Keith Sweeney</b>	Present
<b>Christopher Suggs</b>	Present
<b>Deborah B. Wright, Pension Board</b>	Absent
<b>Joseph Perno, Chief of Police</b>	Present
<b>Carl Flemmig, Interim Deputy Chief</b>	Present
<b>Lee Tiernan, Corporation Counsel</b>	Absent

**Agenda**

Commissioner Sweeney MOVED to add the following items to the agenda:

- 3.4 Letter from Stanley Heller
- 3.5 Letter from West Haven Police Department Retired Officers' Association Executive Board

SECONDED by Commissioner Suggs. Motion carried unanimously.

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

**1. Minutes for Approval**

Commissioner Butler MOVED to accept the minutes of June 16, 2020; SECONDED by Commissioner Suggs. Motion carried unanimously.

**2. Public Input**

In advance of each speaker, Chairman Collins read the following statement:

This Board as well as most City, State and Federal boards and commissions use Robert's Rules of Order to govern how we operate our meetings. While we recognize that the public input is an important feature of these meetings, public portion is not a time for dialogue or a question and answering session between the public and the board. It is, however, a chance to have your comments and concerns heard and read into the minutes. Direct questions can be e-mailed to:

[commissioners@whpd.com](mailto:commissioners@whpd.com) Please keep in mind the three-minute time limit. There is no mention of individual names to be used unless they specifically gave permission. Please be courteous and professional. Failure to do so may result in you being asked to leave. Thank you.

Trenee Mcgee, 52 Eagle Place

On July 5<sup>th</sup>, I received several concerning phone calls, the first being from a fellow councilperson from another city who was contacted by constituents while standing outside of our police department. After that call, I received calls from other constituents expressing [inaudible] their frustration with the lack of accountability on both law enforcers and an individual who drove her car through a crowd of protesters with zero consequences. When I arrived at the police station, I came with the goal and the intention of bringing resolution, because I understood where the protesters were coming from. I honestly wanted to encourage them after the person was released to then disperse because it was after 11 o'clock at night and many of them were exhausted. When I arrived, there was an individual who respectfully spoke into the microphone and asked if I could speak with an officer or with anyone in charge. We were ignored. When I begin to speak to [inaudible] about how their constituents felt and wanted to express our concerns, two of them turned their faces at me.

The culture we have established here is something that people are no longer tolerating. You don't want a culture where we can't trust law enforcement. We want trust, honesty and most importantly community relationship. Instead, we've been handed, it's us against them, a culture where police [inaudible] to maintain order or work is inseparable. Police dogs. That sounds like something from 1963 in Montgomery, Alabama. Having grown up in this community and now serving this community, I am disheartened by the cycle of nepotism, racism, hatred and carelessness that penetrates through the hearts of community members, leaders and those that we trust to serve. West Haven is experiencing a monumental shift, one which people are being held accountable for the very first time. With responsibility comes accountability. I know that we cannot enter discussions but I would just like to ask because I think it's important that you reflect and take the time to grow and become passionate and understanding of the height and the emotional experiences that we're experiencing, although we all have different cultures here.

With that being said I will ask, I want to know why the woman who drove her car through the protesters was not arrested. I want to know why the protesters were arrested. When the last one was released, he really didn't even know why he was arrested. And why police dogs were used as a weapon to keep people in line. Thank you so much for your time. Thank you for listening. I hope it's effective. Have a good evening.

Chairman Collins stated, thank you, Councilwoman.

Monica Cloud, 245 Campbell Avenue

I am recently a University of New Haven graduate in criminal justice. I came to the protest on July 5, 2020, as I saw on Facebook something so disturbing that I just could not believe the town that I grew up in and I lived in was encountering. While I was watching this video, I saw dogs being thrown and threatened at protesters. I saw the root of people being tackled

by the police department or the police that were on the scene, and I also saw a woman that ran her vehicle into peaceful protesters, leave the scene. That is scary.

First, I would like to address the escalation skills. I'm sure West Haven is very familiar with them and how they are used. My question is, why wasn't the escalation skills used while the protest was going, while the event of the woman running her car through protesters, why wasn't de-escalation skills happening. Why did I see officers tackling people, throwing their dogs on people, yelling at people, even using profanity of their own? That is scary. I don't want my police department or the hometown that I live in using such words to do community policing with our citizens. We have a standard we have to hold up to and I think that in this situation on July 5<sup>th</sup> the standard was not met at all. When I arrived here that night, I stood in front of officers and I questioned, why wasn't the woman detained. And of course, they could not give me any information. It's sad to know that there's still no charges pressed against the woman. She nearly hurt someone. Had it been anyone else would the scenario be the same? That's concerning. I think that with this department, regardless that this is the first time happening, the second time or the third, enough is enough. This should not happen. Especially we have other children that look up to this department and they're watching it too. You know social media is a big tool. It's huge. Everyone saw it. I just don't want my child to be looked at as a town that's showing that they don't care about protesters [inaudible] and the right to have a peaceful protest. The woman should have never ran her car into anyone, regardless if they was in the street or not. It still shouldn't have happened. So, will the woman be charged? I know you guys can't answer that but I would like to have [inaudible] officially. Thank you for your time.

Chairman Collins thanked Ms. Cloud for her comments.

Ulish Booker, 9 Sanford Street

I've been in West Haven since 1994, I went to West Haven High School. A lot of my coaches, a lot of interaction that I had growing up were with West Haven Police Department members. My only interaction with West Haven Police Department has been positive. However, given the light of where we're at from a national down to the local landscape, I was a little troubled at what we went just a couple weeks ago as it pertains to the dogs and protesting and all this [inaudible]. First of all, I believe the funding of police is absolutely idiotic, however in this city, the dynamic from when I grew up to where it's at now has changed drastically. With that being said, I'm just curious as it pertains to community interaction, how the cops interact with the locals, and building rapport because it's very important to know your constituents. Like I said, growing up as a Westie, I knew six cops that were around me on a regular basis, either they were my coaches, or they were the service cops inside the school. So I just know West Haven to be a good place for me, and I want to continue to see it in that light. I've been happy about where the police department has been going up until the last couple of weeks. I know situations happen, however what I'm interested in is how we fix it, how we move forward together as a community. Thank you.

Chairman Collins thanked Mr. Booker for his comments.

Brandon Patterson, 66 Chestnut Street

I hear specifically this poor purpose of de-escalating the situation in the city instead of escalating. I, myself, coordinated and co-coordinated a protest on June 6<sup>th</sup>. I thought that was a very peaceful protest; I think it was well done. It was well-protected by the West Haven officers. But I want to understand and make sure accountability is had for all, and everyone has the same access and opportunities. I think that as a department the signal that was shown by the clearly visible crime that took place on July 5<sup>th</sup>, was not a strong signal from the city. It's not a strong signal for this department to permit that kind of activity and let the onlookers were attacked. Obviously escalated by that situation. To see that woman let go, that was not a strong signal for the city and henceforth and the lack of her arrest since has led to the impression that I did not believe previous that the city is not fully protecting protesters. I do not want that to be the marker that West Haven has.

I'm here for accountability because we want to know why a woman who accelerated directly into a crowd of peaceful protesters was not arrested. We want to know how it's good de-escalation practice to not arrest this assailant while the crowd she assailed [inaudible]. We would like to know why the only response was accost visibly upset people instead of dealing with the problem that originated [inaudible]. We want to know why the department has not specifically condemned this activity even as citizen forms members of whom are on this commission visibly see threats being said but the department has not addressed this specifically. We want to know if \$25,000 worth of gear was purchased prior to the June 6 protest and if it was gifted, we want to know who it was gifted by, or lent by. We want to know why West Haven has not had accreditation for its force since 2009. We want to know why these reactions only fuel more energy for protests in this city. We want to know if it requires as great a number of West Haven officers presents lengthy periods of time for protests then why as was indicated in an article that stated that we had \$100,000 in overtime due to protests, why if such of our officers being exasperated, why the department continues to call in Orange, Milford, and even State Police to corral protests. We want to make sure that we're giving the impression to our citizens that everyone is equal no matter the cause they offend for, because I assure to assume that if it was another cause and wasn't asking for police accountability that protesting July 5<sup>th</sup>, whether it be a breast cancer walk, whether something to address any issue, I believe the impression would be that they would've handled it differently than how it was handled. We want everyone to make sure that we are equal before the law and that includes officers.

I've had great experiences with this department. I've had great working relationships with this department [inaudible]. But I've also been scarred first. I've had police at my house without a warrant, without access being granted for no reason. Without reason. I've been accosted for no reason by this department in places as our public parks. Absolutely no reason and [inaudible]. I've also been dealt with respectfully and as a citizenship, I want to make sure that everybody in this city has the same impression about this department, that they are serving equally and just fully served. I appreciate this forum but I would appreciate more exchange with this community. I think that is critical in these times, especially what's been displayed nationally. Our department should not be synonymous with a side that is not with validating peoples' feelings and peoples' hurt. We should be on the side of living up to that expectation that we're going to take whatever we think might be unwarranted that gets

thrown at this department, take that respectfully and exchange and still submit to you the spirit that we're here for service. That's just what I'm saying.

Chairman Collins asked, you're meeting Friday, correct? Mr. Patterson replied, yes. Chairman Collins continued, I hate to cut you off but in fairness for everybody... Thank you for being very professional. Thank you, sir.

Samantha DeGennaro, 97 Holcomb Street

I grew up in West Haven, went to West Haven public schools and recently moved back after being away for over 10 years. I just bought my first home and it's in West Haven. I'm very proud of everything that this city's given me and has to offer, but on July 5<sup>th</sup> I was not proud and on July 7<sup>th</sup> when I attempted to attend this meeting, I grew concerned. I do not want my city to be known for [inaudible] or police brutality. That's not how I know it and that's not, I've had a lot of wonderful experiences with wonderful police officers in this town. I want my friends to visit and go to our beautiful beaches and our great restaurants and see how friendly people are, even if you haven't talked to them in 10 years. In order for that to happen, we cannot ignore things when they go wrong. We can't pretend to think as in times past, people will forget and the problem will go back under the surface. Definitely not in today's world. You cannot govern with the hope that citizens will just be too lazy or uninformed to hold you accountable. On July 5<sup>th</sup>, someone broke the law. It's simple. I can go into all the examples of why I'm not allowed to cross the yellow line, pass multiple cars and drive through a group of people because I decide they should not be there. But I won't, because we all know that that's not okay. No one truly believes that what happened on July 5<sup>th</sup> was lawful.

My real concern is what's holding us back from saying it out loud or doing anything about that. My real concern is the void in leadership, the lack of action that is allowing and encouraging more fear, more distrust and heat to fester and grow in the town that I love. I want to know what West Haven plans to do about the clear undercurrent of fear and hatred that these protests have unearthed. What changes can be made to make everyone feel better, not just the protesters but also the people sitting in their homes terrified because West Haven Police Officers came and knocked on their door saying there might be pepper spray or tear gas as was seen in many alarmist Facebook posts. Some residents have interpreted the absence of any official response and complete lack of repercussion faced by this driver as silent approval for violent behavior against protesters. Printed out here are threatening comments that have been made in public forums, many of them come from forums where officials here have actually posted the date of tonight's meeting. The hate growing in our town is notable by you all. By choosing not to address anything, the problems are growing. I'm asking for leadership; I'm asking for clarity on what is legal and what is not legal. I'm asking the police to do the police's job. Do not deputize citizens with your inaction. I love West Haven, but West Haven's never going to go anywhere. No one's ever going to invest in a town when we can't handle these most basic issues. No, it's not legal to accelerate through a crowd of people. If we can't handle that, there's no hope for any type of significant development for advancement. No one wants to invest in a place where these things are happening and where they're exacerbated by mismanagement and lack of action. Thank you.

Chairman Collins thanked Ms. DeGennaro.

Carlos Burgels aka "Los Fidel," 32 Lynmoore Place, Hamden, formerly of West Haven

I'll be glad to talk to you in a way that you will allow me to talk, sir. I'll be glad to talk to you in a way that you guys would allow us to talk to you. With that being said, I'm here today because the West Haven Police are out of control. On June 6 I called for a peaceful rally. For those of you that don't recognize me, I was recently attacked at the Columbus statue in New Haven. I was the person that shut down I-95 the day after our rally on June 8<sup>th</sup>, I believe it was. My mantras are be constructive, not destructive. We're not here to be violent, we're here to be heard. When I called for a peaceful rally in West Haven, I asked everybody that came to keep it at that peaceful because we will not be the animals that they say we are. The second post [inaudible] on social media is that, if you are a gang member, Bloods, Crips, Latin Kings, please come out, stand with us, you guys act [inaudible] each other stand up to the police. Please come out here and stand in solidarity. That second post was used to circulate around the police station and use as a justification to assign the Street Crime Division to my rally.

After my rally, I was pulled over by the Street Crime Division, without committing any traffic infractions. My car is not registered to me, so the only way they would know I was driving is if they were watching me. That being said, they searched my car. And not within my reach and not even within my view was a fishing hatchet. Again, the car did not belong to me; my father is a fisherman. They used that fishing hatchet to jail me on a possession of deadly weapon charge for \$50,000. Now I am someone who made the news for feeding the homeless all over Connecticut, I am someone who puts [inaudible] together for our youth, I am somebody who just two days ago bought two basketball hoops for \$480 after the Mayor of our City in New Haven told us we couldn't open up a league so that our youths would have something to do. I'm not a dangerous person. If the West Haven Police saw that posting were alarmed, then they should have reached out to me and searched for ways that we could work together to prevent anything occurring during our rally. That never happened, instead I was targeted in silence. I'm a janitor, okay? I don't make the salary you guys make. For me to pay \$5,000 which is 10 percent of the \$50,000 that they jailed me, I had to borrow money from a lot of people that I still owe to this day. I don't know how I'm going to pay them back, because we are in the middle of a crisis right now.

So, West Haven Police Department has all these funds to assign police to rallies to detain peaceful people. I don't understand why that is. Why is there so much money to waste on police that are policing anything? I don't understand that you can't answer the question, but the fact is that we need to defund PDs to refund cities because they're not doing their job. And I'm not anti-police, I'm anti-police brutality. I just want guys that put on a badge and put on their uniform and do the right thing every day. My uncle has been a police officer for Bridgeport for over 30 years. My father retired a correctional officer. I have siblings that are correction officers and retired veterans. We're not against law enforcement. But what your KKK soldiers are, what they're doing is not enforcing the law, they are enforcing white supremacy. That's all I have to say.

Chairman Collins thanked Mr. Burgels for his comments.

Kurt Erickson, 7 Carriage Drive

Mr. Erickson stated, hold on a second. You mean I can't mention direct names of officers of [inaudible] that are directly responsible for...

Chairman Collins stated, correct. You can say, "an officer," but not a name, sir, not in the public portion, unless that person was notified in advance and was able to sit here and defend himself, you can't use anybody's name.

Mr. Erickson stated, that's insane. But you guys can use my name. I just announced my name.

Chairman Collins stated, you announced your name because you gave permission to use your name. You're here. It's not something we made up.

Mr. Erickson stated, I'm here of course to an issue that's persistent and ongoing with an officer and detective here, and probably multiple other ones that are involved. It all started at my house over a civil property dispute which is none of the police's business and it was described by an officer that arrived on the fourth visit in 72 hours. He even said it's not. I have about 20 hours of [inaudible] in the police in the last two years here. We're chronologically putting together, it's disgusting quite frankly. The detective tried to collect comp on me. I called PNA insurance and made sure to get it with that cop on an assault that didn't clearly happen, stole my phone, I had other recordings going that they didn't know about put on perjury from beginning to end on it. This is a decorated attempt and it's disgusting. It's plundering, shocked me with a taser and kidnapped me out of my property that night. I made bond, fought, you know, went to city hall multiple times, had Lou on recording telling me I don't deserve to speak to the Mayor. Excuse the name, I'm sorry. I had somebody in the office that said, you know, I'm recording, I would like to speak to her, Rossi wasn't there, uh, the Mayor wasn't there. After that [inaudible] called, he's passed away recently, right? A young man was shot here in West Haven, and I started attending those marches. We were videotaping during these peaceful events and I confronted one of the officers that was doing surveillance on me on the green and let him know that's my name that he's looking at. He's looking at me, taking pictures, and I got that recording. Next protest for that gentleman which was about two weeks ago, his wife, this detective's wife is on my Facebook friend-requested me, violates my 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> amendment, because I'm suing him currently, and he comes in here and get on my Facebook, and I thought, you know, why are you digging in? Come to find out the posted protests that were at that were supposed to be New Haven Register and everywhere that we would have detours up [inaudible] and protection. The whole event was videotaped from beginning to end on live and shown halfway through there was no protection, all the cars would be allowed to go through. As we started to make our way back down, two cars broke through. I was needed in the front trying to protect the crowd from cars like I'm supposed to do, and the leader back in the rear were trying to protect and thinning us out. You guys made us weak on purpose as a military tactic. You thinned us out a little bit. All of a sudden that guy blows through the top, the lady at the bottom I'm chasing, and your guys come out full bore with no, with 40 cops to hold them with guards on the top. And you kettle bell at the top when you had us down at the bottom. We're trying to enact the arrest of a woman that just ran through a crowd and struck two people. And a citizens arrest which is completely legal and

completely out of policy to give the woman back her keys to a deadly weapon like you guys call it. She just was accused of hitting two people, it was seen by it, officer meandered over there because he was right on the side watching. He meandered over there and took his time, no sirens which is documented, pulls in there 45 seconds after she hit people, and then let's her, gives her keys back, says, "get back in the car and move it," now they have to swing people down there that she just, "I'm sure the highway is against policy here." I'm sure you don't give the keys back to someone who just used a deadly weapon and lets her move it. Then we're watching some more I see this other officer that threw my wife down on tape from last year, didn't arrest her, threatened my son which is about to be in here, I'm scared to be here for two years now. I pay taxes and I own a business here in this town, I see that officer and I engage him, I say colorful things but well within my first amendment rights, I'm ashamed at some of my words I used, but that's here nor there. I've been abused my PTSD and now you're attacking my family numerous times when I live here. I had accords back and forth, he made fun of me. He had the audacity to say I "cried like a bitch when I tased you last year." He said, "you're nothing but a felon," and pandered me off like I'm nothing. And keep in mind I haven't been arrested since 2007 prior to these fictitious assaults on me. Then after that I'm filming, I'm clearly, you know, I'm resisting the release of a woman that just did a crime and they start beating somebody next to me. I'm filming and I move with it and on another angle I'm 10 feet away it just looks close because I got wide angle on my phone, and I'm 10 feet away and all of a sudden they use that, all eyes are on them, they cold-cocked me and [inaudible] spine, tased me, maced me, the same officer that I had those words with that did it last year, got down on my face, I'll write it down he said some very expletive things right in my ears it wasn't even part of the rest of that plan, got up, came back down to take my glasses off and maced me point blank and said derogatory things in my ear which is on tape from multiple angles, get back up, choke-holded me when I got up, put me in the car and I was under arrest again for another assault case, which I clearly didn't touch nobody. It's disgusting that the woman wasn't arrested, it's disgusting that these cops are on tape doing this and you're allowing it. It's even more, I can't raise my kids here, man. It's not okay. I'm not still a felon anymore. I don't operate like I used to. I am against this. I totally am. I'm not going to let people break their oath in front of me because I stand up to my own oath in this country. I fly my flag upside-down right now. I'm in distress. I'm in distress.

Commissioner Collins noted that it's 5 minutes 30 seconds. He stated, I appreciate your comments, sir.

#### Ethan Suarez, 7 Carriage Drive

Chairman Collins stated, sir, before we begin, just keep in mind that this is not a question and answer session, it's a place where we hear your concerns. We can't answer based on Robert's Rules of Order. It's a three-minute time limit. Don't use anybody's name, is important. Be courteous and professional.

Mr. Suarez stated, I never had any issue with the police in my life until I moved to West Haven. I used to live in New York. I couldn't live there anymore because my mom couldn't afford it, so I moved to Connecticut. Ever since we moved here we had like so many problems with the West Haven Police. Cause last year they, I was doing, my stepdad was doing fireworks in our yard and the neighbors called the police and they got very physical.

My mom was injured and that kind of like messed me up because seeing an officer pitching my mom to the ground, you know, that makes me mad, that makes me, you know, I still think about that to this day that my mom didn't deserve to be pitched to the ground by an officer. She should be treated, you know, with a little more respect because she's a woman. This is why I'm protesting, and I stand against the police because I want, I don't feel comfortable with living in this area because of police, cause what they did to my mom.

Chairman Collins thanked Mr. Suarez for his comments.

Garland Eastman, 7 Farmington Chase, Farmington, CT

I've been in here a few times, after seeing the video of a dirty cop. You asked me not to name him, I will not. I do name him on my Facebook. I named the other dirty cops and I have their videos. Two of them from this department. I know when I talk to you I'm just talking to bad cops, because you're covering for dirty cops whose names we know. I think you should all quit. That's pretty simple. You don't do your job well enough to get rid of dirty cops that we have video of doing [inaudible] from behind and calling it a new [inaudible]. To be civil I won't say what he said. Disrespected the person and then disrespect the fourth amendment. These are amendments that matter, not just the second. Because they're a shame to your oath and whatever you think you're doing. You're not law enforcement and I hope you're fired. That's pretty much all I have to say. Then when [inaudible] asked me to take the names down from my Facebook or told, protecting the public from your poorly-trained officers that violently assault people on camera and let white supremacists that are targeting children go away, you can ask me, it's very buoyant, and thank you for asking politely. I will post about your officers that you will not remove as much as I want. I'll use my own website to actually dox them if I wanted to dox them but I did not dox them, I just named them so if someone gets pulled over by the violent thugs they know what to do. Please do better.

Chairman Collins thanked Mr. Eastman for his comments.

Elinor Slomba, 18 Fourth Avenue

When I came to West Haven in 2001, I was from Virginia, I really value and have come to value even more over the years the contrast between a place like that and a place like this in terms of people of all different cultures and races really working and learning side-by-side and being integrated neighborhoods, and I'm very grateful to have the opportunity to raise my kids here compared to there. So kind of taking a stand against any of that over, or covert, racial nonsense kind of creeping into our public discourse is something that's really very important to me. Over the years in my neighborhood and on the block I really found the police to be a very good ally and training the UNH students semester over semester, the difference between a weekday and a weeknight in terms of what they could do for noise, but recognizing that I can also in the way I behave in public spaces there would be a razor step away from that walking forcer that we now know is a Karen. I've made all different kinds of friends and heard all different kinds of stories and I know not everyone has been as fortunate as I have to really see the police as an ally and protector and somebody that you call in to try and maintain standards. I'm not here to discuss hearsay or anything that happened to anybody else. It really broke my heart in June to hear that my 16-year-old was

walking around the neighborhood when he heard the shots that we learned later and in the death of the young man at the base of Exit 43. The first thing that schizophrenia often brings out in young adulthood and late teenage years, and I shudder to think that if was my own son having a schizophrenic break and behaving very badly and committing acts that would be considered antisocial, I would hope that he would get out of that alive and be able to see his day in court. It just didn't fall on me correctly that West Haven had nothing to do with that. I know that was the party line but it just didn't feel correct to say that when we have a sign on our green that says we're a city with a heart, and we were around to hear it and witness the occurrence. I didn't really have a language to connect what I was hearing and what didn't quite feel right until we saw the horrible videos of George Floyd's death and then we saw the officer that was, you know, quiet, that was on the scene kind of maintaining that scene, [inaudible] space for that scene but not saying anything. That's kind of what I felt, unfortunately, that our department's role in that incident in January could be kind of considered or reflected upon in that manner, with no disrespect to anyone it does seem in [inaudible] to say that we really had nothing to do with that incident. In the face of the protest we had here June 6<sup>th</sup>, thank you for helping that be a peaceful protest, you really did. I'm sorry the same can't be said for the July 5<sup>th</sup>. I urge you to bring the investigation to a swift conclusion against the driver on that day, hopefully resulting in charges. To do otherwise to me amounts to a troubling violation of the protesters' civil rights as well as the would-be protesters who might be afraid now that the same thing might happen to them, especially because there's so much "yelling fire in the movie theatre" if you will of people over and over in our public discourse now since July 5<sup>th</sup> saying, "I would do the same thing to any protesters that I see." Like, going out of their way, gas pedals on the ready. I'll wrap up to say I look forward to supporting the protesters' right to peacefully protest and to being there as that subtle, hopefully mom energy that things won't get too out of hand. I really appreciate the opportunity for public input tonight and I urge the department to be open to the cultural conversation that desperately needs to happen.

Chairman Collins thanked Ms. Slomba for her comments.

Lionel Louis, 31 Judith Lane

For a start, my general point is, when will West Haven Police Department, knowing us in the community, take a stand about certain opposition of our community. We need to shift our focus to collaboration. We don't want to be your enemies; we want trust, we want ability, we want the police to do better or else we will never be silent. For example, Sunday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, I know you all remember this incident. A woman drove her car through the crowd of protesters and the police response. There's this [inaudible] training, the way you [inaudible] and it's undeniable because the officers that responded to that incident, instead of arresting that woman, there was a [inaudible] on the protesters. Sunday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, we had another protest. We sat in this parking lot for hours on end one night. I heard the voice of a single officer until we had to call you out because of the homeless and possible homeless gentleman came by antagonizing us, so we called you to support. That was the first time I saw [inaudible] peeking out from the side door windows. West Haven PD, simply, you guys don't serve and protect the dignity, respect and precision. They all stop the streets and the protest, and the rule was forced and struck fear into the people that you're, it's your job to serve us and protect us. I'm just. The flaws are apparent. Who is going to handle them? I know this is [inaudible].

On that Sunday, July 5<sup>th</sup> protest, your response after everyone came by the police station parking lot, I don't know whose decision it was but for some reason State Troopers were called in. I find that very [inaudible] and blatantly [inaudible] because the reason we were protesting was for the murder of the Connecticut resident who was killed in West Haven by a State Trooper at the order of a West Haven police officer. So we were protesting the actions of a State Trooper, why at that protest were the West Haven PD were you guys on our side and actually be that Black Lives Matter and actually serve our community, why wouldn't you call on the very face of murder, it just doesn't make sense. It simply doesn't. Symbolically that is condoning their actions and that is blatantly against the [inaudible] at the protest earlier in June where we had a huge gathering in the parking lot and we saw everyone knelt with us, they said Black Lives Matter with us, grand gestures, I loved to see it on Twitter. But when it comes down to it, a month later, you guys undid all of that by calling in those State Troopers. You guys organized that and welcome why that choice was made [inaudible]. We want progress, we want to work with you, we want your trust, we don't want to hurt anymore. We've been hurting for a long time.

Chairman Collins thanked Mr. Louis for his comments.

The Commission observed a six-minute recess.

Matthew Murillo, 715 Jones Hill Road

First and foremost, this isn't the most efficient way to conduct a meeting like this, you want open communication with the [inaudible], you want to make sure you have conversation as opposed to me just speaking to you guys. If you really are interested in improvement, this isn't the way to go. I know there are rules but you guys have the ability to improve upon that. So I know also all of this would be on the record so I do just have a series of questions that I have to ask you guys to be considered when, during your next commission meetings, you can address. What are some tentative steps the police department had committed to for meaningful change in the city? Why were the police denied funding for body cameras? Now, before you come up with some answer geared toward long-term costs in the meeting, combine that we're aware that the group promised State funding for technology as well as one year's storage. We're also aware that you were given thousands of dollars to update your technological system, yet there is still no body cameras in place. We are also aware that you were provided \$25,000 in funding towards [inaudible] from an exterior source. I do not have the information as to where that funding came from, I know it wasn't taxpayer dollars, yet you still have funding to do that. You obviously have the resources at hand if needed to acquire such gear and such equipment to keep the community safe and to improve community relations, yet you refrain from doing so. Lastly, one more question I have is, are there currently plans to implement a civilian review board? I hope those are all addressed at the next commission meeting, but for right now I have nothing else to say.

Chairman Collins thanked Mr. Murillo for his comments.

Mike Lazarre, 168 Rangely Street

I came to this event today to speak about accountability. I wanted to speak about how I used to believe that my town was denied federal grants even with body cameras. The same body cameras that will help transparency and accountability in this town given the whole national crisis that we have going on [inaudible] that we implement, at least worded that it was not implemented. I want to speak about how one of the several times I came to protest with Black Lives we were met with no police officers here on the other end. Nobody here was here to hear us or listen to what we had to say or hear our demands. Basically, they were kind of there, kind of a joke. Another opportunity for transparency and accountability that was not seen, not met. I want to speak about how an incident occurred out at these protests where, as many of you probably know, a driver ran through the protesters and left unscathed. And when we were supposed to have this meeting a long time ago to address this concern it was not dealt with, it was met with [inaudible] this meeting. It sounded like an excuse but maybe you guys had your reasons for that. Once again another opportunity for accountability and transparency that was not met. When the [inaudible] took on myself to answer any questions, but I want to ask whether you guys believe that Black Lives Matter. Whether when you see me do you see a son, do you see a nephew, a cousin, a human. Maybe you don't. For me the son, [inaudible] West Haven, I don't know what people see when they see me I don't think people ask, what grades you get, how did you get into a school at Hopkins, why did you go to school at [inaudible] one of the best schools in the state or the country. But instead it might just be the reason of the color of my skin. These are all topics you may or may not care about, who knows. For me that's what this is about, this is about a lot more than just having a conversation with police and having to build this accountability and transparency. This is about knowing whether or not you have been caring about human beings and how we can go about making sure that I know that you do care about those human beings because to me it's about a lot more than just knowing that you have had a lot of time that I could care less. For me as someone who has [inaudible] with their parents in this country and I'm so grateful for all the things this country has offered me, I need to know that they didn't come to this country in vain and [inaudible] and I have every right to [inaudible] fullest extent just like any other white kid in this town and make mistakes and maybe do something dumb and get arrested and not have to deal with repercussions [inaudible]. So hopefully you guys listened. I appreciate you guys being here. I appreciate this conversation that we're having and hopefully we could [inaudible] long future for [inaudible].

Chairman Collins thanked Mr. Lazarre for his comments.

Harvey Fair, 323 Center Street

I came to express my concern and that is a pedestrian being allowed to drive a car through a crowd of people. If one of these young kids right now took a bicycle and ran it up on the sidewalk, they're probably going to get arrested. How is that allowed? I was taught, and I've been driving for a lot of years, that pedestrians, you know, you protect them. We saw it down South Carolina where this guy killed a young lady April by doing the same thing. It's like it's a pattern now with people who are hostile toward anybody that protests. So I'm not here to defend any action at all, I do believe in the right to protest, I believe this will be peaceful, I believe this will be non-destructive. But to allow anybody no matter who it is

whether it's a family member of mine or my wife to drive a car through a crowd of people with kids and stuff like that, that's just certain to be addressed. I hope that would concern all of us as Americans. That's it.

Chairman Collins thanked Mr. Fair for his comments.

Andrew Giering, 43 Harbour Close

Thank you for your time. I didn't prepare any remarks 'cause I was at work and didn't think I was going to make it. I did encourage other people to come and I'm glad I had a chance to. I grew up in West Haven, my mom recently retired as a letter carrier delivering mail on Elm Street for 30 years. My family's been here a long time, I came through the West Haven public school system. I'm a graduate of Yale Law School and I work as a federal public defender in the State. I have never spoken on any matter of public import in West Haven, and I wouldn't be here today if I didn't think this was a gravely serious matter. You know, I do hold my punches, I don't make a big mess out of everything, I really respect the work you guys do. But the reason I decided to speak today is because in the aftermath of you know, the incident on June 5<sup>th</sup>, and even in the days and especially the weeks following it, I saw some really hateful stuff online. The [inaudible] stuff. Not from like fake accounts or online trolls, but from real people who I know, my mom's delivered mail to. It's nothing new, it's the same racist garbage I've heard in bars up and down Campbell Avenue, at the Elks Club, on the beach, everywhere in West Haven, we all know it, we know it's a part of the culture of the city, but ultimately I think West Haven is better than that. Ultimately, I think we have an opportunity here to kind of take a stand and to tell people, set your hate aside. Regardless of what people are protesting, even if you don't agree with it, even if it annoys you, even if you have to, you know, go two blocks out of your way or wait a little bit, respect their first amendment right. I'd be up here saying the same thing if it was a bunch of truck protesters. You know, even the KKK has the right to march down the streets. They're what's considered a traditional public forum on their first amendment jurisprudence. There is a right to protest. There isn't a right to make the kind of threats I've seen online. Federal Court would be classified as true threats and it's not just idle noise, because we've seen reports all around the country of people driving through crowds. We saw in Charlottesville where a young woman was killed from a man who drove into the crowd and the last few months after George Floyd's protest we've seen dozens of incidents of people driving in the crowd. So you know, considering what's going on in the world, considering how silence on this issue from the department, from the commission, from the city, has emboldened racists in our community, and I've seen that in a very real, visceral way online, hopefully that's been demonstrated to you guys today. If not, spend some time online. Troll around. I'm saying these aren't fake accounts, they're real people. These are our brothers, sisters, they're real [inaudible] that you know what, you're in my way, I can stomp on the gas and mow you down. Anyway, I really don't want to be here today, really value the credibility I build in the community and don't want to waste it on issues like this, but I think this is gravely serious and I want to speak up before somebody does get hurt. Thank you guys for your time and your consideration.

Chairman Collins thanked Mr. Giering. He asked three times if any other member of the public wished to speak. Being none, he declared the public session closed.

### **3. Communications**

The following monthly reports for May 2020 and two communications were accepted on a MOTION by Commissioner Buter and SECONDED by Commissioner Sugs. Motion carried unanimously.

- 3.1 K9 – Officer Marchitto/K9 Ado
- 3.2 Traffic Division
- 3.3 Training Division
- 3.4 Letter from Stanley Heller
- 3.5 Letter from West Haven Police Department Retired Officers Association Executive Board

**4. Report of the Chief – No report**

**5. Report of the Deputy Chief – No report**

**6. Report of the Committees – No report**

**7. Old Business – None presented**

**8. New Business – None presented**

**9. Pension Board – No report**

**10. Commissioners Reports**

In reply to a question from Commissioner Sweeney, Chief Perno stated, we have vendors coming in for the camera repair on Thursday. There are no takers on plumbing repair yet. The RFPs are being rewritten.

### **11. Executive Session**

At 8:24 p.m., Commissioner Butler MOVED to enter Executive Session to discuss the Street Crime Report for May, 2020; SECONDED by Commissioner Sweeney. Motion carried unanimously.

### **12. Return to Regular Session/Adjournment**

At 8:25 p.m. the Commissioners returned to regular session and adjourned on a motion by Commissioner Sweeney; SECONDED by Commissioner Butler. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

*Trish Bruder*

Patricia M. Bruder, Recording Secretary