

City of West Haven, CT
Board of Police Commissioners
Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday, October 19, 2021

The regular meeting of the West Haven Board of Police Commissioners was called to order at 7:00 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>	Present
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 Wright MOVED to accept the agenda as presented; SECONDED by Commissioner Carrano. Motion carried unanimously.

1. Minutes

Commissioner Butler MOVED to accept the minutes of October 5, 2021 as presented; SECONDED by Commissioner Wright. 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

The following monthly reports:

- 3.1 Animal Control Report – September 2021
- 3.2 Attendance Report – September 2021
- 3.3 Traffic Report – September 2021
- 3.4 Training Report – September 2021

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4. Report of the Chief

Chief Perno stated that he would like to refer to the committees for his report.

Commissioner Suggs passed along questions to the Chief from the Planning and Zoning Commission. The first concern was from Commissioner Joe Vecellio about the replacement of a “Do Not Park in Front of the Fire Station” sign that was removed on Pheasant Road due to work that was being done in the area. He also brought up the concern about parking issues associated with the newly approved apartment building on Campbell Avenue and Washington Street. He stated that a resolution is needed when it comes to working out a parking situation with the residents of the apartment building and with the traffic associated with students from the Washington School being dropped off in the morning and picked up in the afternoon.

The Chief responded that to officially address the concerns, he would like the question from the Planning and Zoning Commission submitted for a Traffic and Parking Study for Washington School on Brown Street and Washington Avenue.

5. Report of the Deputy Chief

Deputy Chief Flemmig offered the following report:

“With tonight’s resignation we will be staffed at 114 Officers. We are minus 2 Officers in Police Academy, 4 Officers out injured, 1 Officer on Light Duty and 1 Officer on FMLA, which leaves us a total of 106 available Officers.

There are two Officers at the Police Academy. One will graduate in January 2022, and the other sometime in March or April 2022.

The SCCJA Police Exam application process closed today and the exam is scheduled for the end of this month. As of Friday, October 15th, there was a total of only 11 applicants to take the exam and we will be competing with 4 other Police Departments during this testing period.”

Chairman Collins asked how many people usually sign up for the application process and how many Officers the department needs. Deputy Chief Flemmig responded that it’s usually hundreds of applicants, but recently that number has significantly dropped. He also stated that there are 4 seats open for the Academy, one of which is reserved for an Officer that will be cleared to go back after he was previously injured at the Academy.

Chief Perno clarified that the injured Officer from the Academy is the one Officer who is currently on Light Duty until he resumes the Academy.

6. Report of the Committees

Commissioner Carrano gave a report regarding the Personnel Committee meeting that was held on October 19th at 6:01 PM with attendance from Mayor Rossi, Councilperson Hoskie, Councilperson Bruneau, Lieutenant Romano, Chief Flemmig, Chief Perno, Commissioner

Butler, Chair of the Personnel Committee, and himself, member of the Personnel Committee. The purpose of the meeting was to restructure the police department to add a Captain of Professional Standards to allow the department to come in compliance with the Police Accountability Bill. He stated that they are looking to get the added position on the agenda for the next City Council meeting. The Personnel Committee meeting was adjourned at 6:55 PM.

Commissioner Carrano yielded the floor to Lieutenant Joseph Romano to offer more information regarding changes occurring within the department to comply with the new accountability bill.

Lieutenant Romano explained that on July 29th, 2020, the Senate approved the Police Accountability Bill, which brought about many changes for law enforcement within the state of Connecticut. The bill has garnered much attention and included changes to the use of force, post mandates, and accreditation. The most substantial change that he highlighted was the mandate pertaining to body cameras. The bill states that by July 1st, 2022, body worn cameras shall be worn by police officers, and dash cameras shall be used in police vehicles. With the new mandates, Lieutenant Romano was tasked by Chief Perno to secure the appropriate body camera equipment and to develop the proper policies and procedures to successfully implement the technology.

He stated that the West Haven Police Department was able to purchase the Axon Body and Dashboard Camera System, which is one of the best in the industry. Also included in the deal were 62 Taser 7s, which were desperately needed to replace the tasers currently used. They received nearly the one million dollars' worth of equipment on September 16th. Although the product is in hand, there are many objectives that need to be met in a strict timeline to achieve the goal. He emphasized that the Chiefs and the Commissioners believe that it's of the utmost importance for the agency to construct a proper Professional Standards Division, which will encompass a Body Camera Unit, Accreditation Team, Internal Affairs, as well as numerous support services that make the agency operate. The Chiefs and himself have created an updated command structure of the agency. He also prepared a body camera and taser next step check list that documented what is needed to successfully accomplish the mission. He thanked all individuals that have been instrumental in obtaining the equipment and appreciated the support he has gotten with the project with the hopes of approving police legitimacy for West Haven.

He went on to review the timeline and the updated organizational chart. In the current organizational structure of the department with two Captains, there are divisions that are overloaded and need a change. In the updated organizational structure, the new system has three Captains instead of two, which separates the workload of each Captain, and it takes into account the new Body Camera Unit. He outlined the next steps that are needed to implement the body cameras and tasers, which include:

1. Installing the Internal Infrastructure for the body camera project (starts October 21st)
This consists of:
 - a. Upgrading the IT network to support the new equipment;
 - b. Construction of the Body Camera storage room;
 - c. Access points installed in the rear of the building for wireless uploads of Body/Dash Camera Data.

2. Having all personnel trained on Taser 7 (start date November 1st).
3. Writing the Body Camera Grant/Send it to the State.
4. Writing the WHPD Body Camera General Order, have it approved by Command Staff and later disseminated to all sworn officers.
5. On site Body Camera training will take place at WHPD on January 31st-February 4th (Axon team deployed from Alabama to assist).
6. Get prepared to receive Axon Fleet and have the product installed in Patrol vehicles. (Axon support team will be sent from North Carolina to assist).
7. Go live with all new equipment prior to the Accountability Bill July 1st, 2022, deadline.

He acknowledged that the schedule is very demanding, but that it looks promising that it will be accomplished with a lot of hard work. He opened up the floor to questions.

Chief Perno thanked Mayor Rossi, Councilperson and Finance Chair Bridgette Hoskie, and the Police Liaison to the City Council, Robert Bruneau, for their assistance in this big project. He went on to provide historical context regarding the structure of the WHPD for those unfamiliar with how it has been structured in the past. He explained that over the years, the number of Captains was moved down from four to two. He stated that with the accountability bill, the technology of body cameras and dash cameras, as well as other factors associated with them, such as FOIs and infrastructure, will be an added liability to the city and to the department if it is not done to the standards of the bill. With the restructuring of the department, the process for requesting items such as FOI, overseeing jurisdictions such as IT, and handling internal affairs investigations, will be streamlined with a focal point and complete control under the third Captain. The Chief also explained that the cost yearly is a \$23,000 difference between a Grade A Patrolman and a Grade A Captain. When broken down, it is a \$410 per week difference, which he believes is well spent considering all the added responsibilities that an Officer would need to take on for the agency. He also added that body and dash cameras would start to be introduced around March or April to fix any bugs prior to their full implementation.

Lieutenant Romano added that the timeline for the cruiser and building cameras hasn't been finalized yet because of delays from the companies, but there has been assurance from representatives that the equipment will arrive in time.

Commissioner Carrano re-emphasized that a new member is not being added to the department as a result of the restructuring, it is merely a shift in positions by making one of the Patrol Officers a Captain. That shift in a position is what would reflect the \$410 per week difference.

Commissioner Wright asked that in regard to the grant Lieutenant Romano was writing, if there is a maximum amount of money that can be requested. Lieutenant Romano responded that it is only for 50% of the equipment that was purchased. The department won't be able to get back the money spent on storage and data. He mentioned that he has spoken to the person in charge of the grants through the state, and he has gotten reassurance that the money is available. The canceled check from City Hall would need to be sent out to them to begin the process. He also added that based on other agencies who have tried to store their own data, it would be more cost effective to have data stored in the cloud.

Commissioner Suggs asked how the process will work when it comes to upgrading or replacing hardware for the equipment. Lieutenant Romano explained that they have a five-year contract with Axon, and if any equipment is broken, the company will send a replacement right away. Through the partnership with Axon, the department will also be eligible for upgrades in the technology. He also stated that after the five-year contract expires, a new contract with the company will be needed.

Councilperson Hoskie asked how the shift in positions would work to create the third Captain position. Chief Perno explained that it is a shift in organizational structure and the spots would continue to be filled based on the promotional rankings. A Lieutenant would be promoted to Captain, a Sergeant would be promoted to Lieutenant, and a Patrolman would become a Sergeant. He explained that it is all budgeted, and that the only additional increase would be the \$23,000 a year, or \$410 per week, for the Captain position.

Commissioner Bruneau commended the department for all the hard work they have put in and the good job they have done with picking the right company.

Mayor Rossi thanked everyone involved with the project on their hard work. She explained that it's been a matter she's wanted to get addressed since she first got into office because it protects everyone involved, but due to a lack of money, it hasn't been possible until now.

7. Old Business – None Presented

8. New Business

8.1 Resignation – Officer Maria Teles #291

Commissioner Butler MOVED to accept Officer Maria Teles's resignation, effective October 18th, 2021; SECONDED by Commissioner Wright. Motion carried unanimously.

8.2 WHPD Command Restructuring

Commissioner Carrano MOVED to accept the plan for WHPD Command Restructuring; SECONDED by Commissioner Butler. Motion carried unanimously.

9. Pension Board

9.1 Mr. David Moran – Raymond James

Mr. Moran gave a report on the status of the police pension.

Commissioner Wright mentioned that she and Mr. Moran will be meeting next month to go over asset allocations. She also mentioned that for next month, Mr. Moran will be providing an update at the upcoming meeting on November 2nd, rather than at the meeting on the third Tuesday of the month.

10. Executive Session

Commissioner Butler MOVED to enter Executive Session to discuss the following monthly report:

10.1 Special Victims and Firearms Report – September 2021

Motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Wright. Motion carried unanimously.

The Commissioners entered Executive Session at 7:35 PM.

11. Return to Regular Session/Adjournment

At 7:40 PM, the Commissioners returned to regular session and adjourned by a motion from Commissioner Butler; SECONDED by Commissioner Wright. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Briana Hojo
Recording Clerk