

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL POLICE COMMISSION MEETING
of
Wednesday February 26, 2014

Commissioners Present: Thomas Reynolds, Chairman
Marianne Coffin, Secretary
Charles Knoche
Joseph Savino
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 6:08pm by Chairman Reynolds.

Agenda Item #1

Chairman Reynolds requested a motion to move Agenda Item 5 a) Presentation of Retirement Award to the top of the agenda (between Items 3 and 4) and to move discussion of Agenda Item 5 c) Officer of the Year to Executive Session. Commissioner Knoche motioned to approve the moves; Commissioner Coffin seconded the motion. All in Favor.

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

Agenda Item #2

Chairman Reynolds requested a motion to accept the minutes of the January 9, 2014 Police Commission meeting. Commissioner Knoche motioned to accept the minutes; Commissioner Coffin seconded the motion.

All in Favor

Minutes of the January 9, 2014 Police Commission meeting accepted as written.

Chairman Reynolds requested a motion to accept the minutes of the January 16, 2014 Special Police Commission meeting. Commissioner Knoche motioned to accept the minutes; Commissioner Coffin seconded the motion.

All in Favor

Minutes of the January 16, 2014 Special Police Commission meeting accepted as written.

Chairman Reynolds requested a motion to accept the documentation of the January 31, 2014 Special Police Commission Executive Session meeting. Commissioner Knoche motioned to accept; Commissioner Coffin seconded the motion.

All in Favor

Documentation of the January 31, 2014 Special Police Commission Executive Session meeting accepted as written.

Chairman Reynolds requested a motion to accept the documentation of the February 12, 2014 Special Police Commission Executive Session meeting.

Commissioner Knoche motioned to accept; Commissioner Coffin seconded the motion.

All in Favor

Documentation of the February 12, 2014 Special Police Commission Executive Session meeting accepted as written.

Agenda Item #3a Commission Voice Mail

Commissioner Coffin stated that she checked the voice mail on January 14th, 21st and 28th and February 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th – there were no messages.

Agenda Item #3b Commission Correspondence

Chairman Reynolds stated that a notice from Town Clerk Serfilippi was received regarding the guidelines for public meetings. A copy of this notice will be mailed out to the Commissioners.

A request was received from the Weir Farm requesting additional crosswalks installed for visitor safety. Chief Roche stated that he will direct the Traffic Sign Officer to review the area and report back to the Commission.

On the subject of signage, Commissioner Savino asked if any signs had been installed at the location of the stone wall being built on Nod Hill Road (discussed at a previous meeting) and Chief Roche stated that due to the weather, nothing has been implemented to date.

Commissioner Reynolds stated that he has four applications for Use of State Highways for upcoming events in Ridgefield. Commissioner Reynolds stated that he will review the applications and sign off on them. They will then be forwarded to the State Department of Transportation for review and approval. Chief Roche explained the process for the Commission's newest member, Joseph Savino. Chief Roche stated that any time the Town is hosting an event (fair, run, fireworks, etc.) that will encroach a State road, notice needs to be sent to the State for permission to use their roads. The applicant submits the State form to the Uniform Division Commander and if he approves, it is sent to the Commission (as the Legal Traffic Authority) for their approval and signature and then forwarded to the State for their approval and permit number. In response to Commissioner Savino's question, Chief Roche stated that the Halloween Walk and Summer fair applications will be coming – they are to be submitted 90 days before the event. The applications that will be forwarded to the State at this time are for:

- 1) Run Like a Mother 5K Run on May 11th;
- 2) Memorial Day Parade on May 26th;
- 3) Tri Ridgefield Triathlon on June 1st;
- 4) Family Fourth Celebration on July 4th.

Agenda Item #5a – Presentation of Retirement Award to Captain Ryan

Chairman Reynolds stated that it is with pleasure to have Captain Ryan here tonight and he would like to read a letter from the Commissioners that will sum up their thoughts on Captain Ryan's contributions to the Department.

Commissioner Reynolds read that the Town of Ridgefield has indeed been fortunate to have had Captain Ryan's extensive experience and judgment for the past twenty-eight years; that his professionalism, dedication and respect from other officers have been a credit to our Department. Captain Ryan's contributions and accomplishments at the Department have been and will remain a lasting legacy of his commitment to law enforcement.

Commissioner Reynolds stated that Captain Ryan's career with the Ridgefield Police Department has been rich with experience to include his positions as a Patrol Officer, Detective, Sergeant-in-Patrol, Detective Sergeant overseeing the Bureau, Field Training Officer, Community Policing Officer, Lieutenant, Captain of the Department's Training Division, Captain of the Department's Detective Division and member of the Department's Honor Guard.

Commissioner Reynolds continued to read that in 1995, the Ridgefield Police Department, in partnership with the Federal Government's Office of Community Policing, formally instituted the practice of Community Policing in Ridgefield and then Sergeant Ryan was chosen to lead and oversee this project which transformed the Department's practice of policing for generations to come.

Commissioner Reynolds stated that Captain Ryan was the recipient of the Department's Exceptional Service Award in 1989 and was chosen by the Board of Police Commissioners as the 1989 and 1998 Police Officer of the Year. Captain Ryan also received seventy-two letters of recognition from citizens thanking him for his service, received seven Letters of Recognition from other law enforcement agencies for his assistance and had been commended on seven occasions by the Office of the Chief of Police for outstanding service.

Commissioner Reynolds stated that Captain Dan Ryan will be missed by all at the Ridgefield Police Department and thanked him for twenty-eight years of professionalism and dedication to the Community of Ridgefield. The Commissioners concluded their letter with, "Be proud of such an impressive career – *Thank You and Best Wishes*".

Captain Ryan's wife, Dawn, and all in attendance applauded Dan and his achievements. Dan was presented with his retirement badge and presented with a shadow box containing the Department patch, a plaque inscribed with all the positions he held, his years of service bars, his Officer of the Year bars, his Exceptional Service Award bar and his uniform insignia – a very notable career.

Commissioner Reynolds stated and all the Commissioners agreed that it is with mixed emotions that we are all present at this meeting – that it is hard losing the good guys and he is a good guy.

Captain Ryan stated that he does miss the Department and his work – he did enjoy his job. He thanked the Commissioners and all present for their good wishes and thanked Chief Roche and the members of the Department for their support over the years. After photos and some conversation, Dan and Dawn said good night and thank you to all.

Agenda Item #4 Chief's Report

Chief Roche stated that Commissioner Savino had questioned about the number of pistol permits in Ridgefield at the last meeting and Chief Roche had told him he would have to get back to him with the exact number. Chief Roche reported that in 2013, the Ridgefield Police Department issued 149 Temporary Pistol Permits and in 2014 we have issued 12. Chief Roche continued that the Connecticut State Police have on file 854 permits (good for five years from date of issuance) for the Town of Ridgefield.

Reports of the Division of Professional Standards for January and February:

Crime Prevention – December 2013:

- Cub Scout Tour of HQ with Zeus and Officer Murray.
- Nursery school tour of HQ by Officer Romero.
- Officer DiFalco graduated from POST.
- Swearing-In of Probationary Officer Tinsley.

January 2014

- Cub Scout Tour of HQ with Officer Gjodesen.
- Daisy Girl Scout tour of HQ with Officer Gjodesen and Officer DiFalco.

Training Reports – December 2013:

- First Line Supervisor class at Roger Williams for Sgt. Fowler and Sgt. Durling.
- Use of Force Seminar at Mohegan Sun for Major Brown.
- EMT Recertification for P.O. Ladue.
- Cruelty Cases for Animals at Oxford PD for ACO Coles.

January 2014

- Recertification at WesConn for Captain Terzian, Sgt. Raines, Y.O. Dardis.
- COLLECT Recertification for entire Department, including Dispatchers.
- First Line Supervisor for Sgt. Fowler at POST.

Traffic Issues

Ethan Allen Highway/New Road

Chief Roche stated that he contacted the State DOT regarding complaints about the flow of traffic at Route 7/New Road. Chief Roche stated that he had an Officer monitor this area and he reported that he feels the traffic sensor at this intersection is not functioning properly. Chief Roche stated that the State is now aware of this problem and will correct the loop that may be causing the problem in the coming months.

Danbury Road

An e-mail complaint was received about the traffic jam during rush hours by vehicles driving towards the center of Town. Traffic backs up from Farmingville Road to Limestone Road and it creates a gridlock situation. Chief Roche stated that this problem has already been presented to the State DOT and they were working on broken loops (sensors in the ground that trigger the light – as pointed out by Commissioner Knoche, they are known as “Smart Lights”) but were stalled by the weather. The complainant was informed of their concern being handled by the DOT.

Chief Roche stated that he also feels that the traffic buildup is caused by those who use Ridgefield as a cut-thru to 684 and 84 to go North and South.

Ridgefield Supply

The Commission was requested by the Planning & Zoning Department to review an application for redevelopment of the Ridgefield Supply property. The proposal is to modernize and place most of the building products (now stored outside) under a roof. Commissioner Savino stated that he reviewed the submitted material and has no issues with the project. Chief Roche also stated that he has no issue – that they are not going to change the face of the existing premises. Commissioner Reynolds stated that there will be more action on Prospect Street with the opening of the Prospector and the renovated library building and he will be interested to see how it all evolves but he sees no impact on the traffic in the area.

Chief Roche stated that the owners of Ridgefield Supply are being good Community leaders by allowing the Prospector and the Gallo Ristorante use their expanded parking lot in off hours.

Mobil

Commissioner Savino asked Chief Roche what the outcome was to the project proposal for the existing Mobil station changing into a gas/convenience store location. Chief Roche stated that Planning Director Brosius received the Commission’s recommendation letter stating their concerns and that the application had been approved. Chief Roche stated that Grove Street is due to be milled and resurfaced this Spring and Commissioner Knoche asked if they could shift the lanes a bit at the Danbury Road/Grove Street intersection to allow more room for cars turning onto Grove Street. Chief Roche stated that he feels that the two lanes of traffic on the right side of the road (towards Danbury Road) should be different lengths – the left lane should be shorter than the right lane to allow for cars turning onto Grove Street. He also said there is no white line on the Pamby side of the road to delineate the lane width and that should be applied.

Commissioner Savino stated that the Commission laid out their concerns and asked if the State would adjust the light at this intersection.

Commissioner Reynolds stated that the Commission voiced their concerns to Planning & Zoning and now we should take the responsibility to contact the State

directly. Chief Roche stated that he will draft a cover letter to go with the letter sent to Planning & Zoning and send them to the State. A request for a response from the State will be included in the cover letter. Commissioner Savino thanked the Commission for taking this step.

Commendation

Chief Roche stated that on November 1, 2013, the Commendation Board received a request that Officer Jorge Romero be awarded the Exceptional Service Ribbon and one day off for his actions on May 10, 2013.

Chief Roche explained that on May 10th, Officer Romero was dispatched to a possible suicide call. Upon arrival at the location, Officer Romero encountered an upset person with blood on his hand and broken glass strewn around. After questioning those in the home, Officer Romero established probable cause for an arrest but the male would not cooperate and had to be held down. While holding the male on the couch, he reached for Officer Romero's gun but Officer Romero placed both of his hands on the gun and yelled to his fellow Officer for help. Officer Romero was able to remove the male's hands from his gun and the male tried to flee and kicked and punched the Officers.

The recommendation states that Officer Romero's actions were exemplary and he showed great restraint in this incident which resulted in subduing the individual and making sure he received the medical attention he needed despite the fact that Officer Romero sustained an injury to his shoulder and finger.

Commissioner Knoche motioned to award Officer Romero; seconded by Officer Kain.

Officer Jorge Romero to be awarded the Department's Exceptional Service Award and one day off. All in Favor

Statistics

Chief Roche stated that the incident total for the month of January was 1,516; with two (2) K-9 assists.

During the month, the Department responded to 67 Alarms, 23 Medical Assists, investigated 84 Motor Vehicle Accidents, fingerprinted 22 applicants, issued 443 Motor Vehicle Enforcement violations, completed 5 Narcotic Arrests, 6 DUI arrests, notified the State DOT 8 times and the Town Highway 18 times about inclement weather conditions and processed 7 Pistol Permit applicants.

Commissioner Kain asked if the Officers actually rendered any medical attention at the medical incidents before the arrival of the fire department. Chief Roche stated that he will research this request and report back to the Commission.

Agenda Item #5b Chief's Goals

Commissioner Knoche stated that he and Commissioner Coffin (sub-committee for the goals) met with Chief Roche and arrived at the following list of goals for the Chief for 2014. Commissioner Savino asked if the list was in priority order or just written as agreed upon. The Commissioners stated that they do not prioritize as all of the goals are relevant. Commissioner Coffin stated that all the

goals will be completed within the year so she does not see the need to prioritize. She pointed out the fact that some of the goals were even given a longer completion due date (Social Media) as it is a new issue for the Department and will require research, compatibility, procedure implementation and discussion before it is completed.

Commissioner Savino stated that he realizes that the Town is rated the safest yet he does not see anything in the goals relative to keeping safety a key goal.

Commissioner Coffin and Chief Roche stated that an exceptional event such as a homicide would be enough to knock you out of being #1 – you can't dwell on one measure, it is the whole package that attains the #1 spot. Chief Roche stated that the most important goal is training – it is what allows the Officers to provide the best protection for themselves and the Town. The goals are:

- 1) **Police Headquarters Upgrade and Renovation**
To continue ongoing dialogue and meetings with Police Commission Sub-committee, Architect and the Town Building Committee to maintain project activity and preparation for Capital Budget proposal.
- 2) **Department Training**
Continued participation in current and emerging training programs, schools and conferences for all Police Department personnel to ensure continued high level of professionalism of the Department.
- 3) **Physical Fitness**
The Chief of Police shall participate in at least one of the Department's Voluntary Fitness days.
- 4) **Central Dispatch**
To continue ongoing dialogue and meetings with Town Officials in order to maintain the goal of a Central Dispatch Center at Police Headquarters for the Town of Ridgefield.
- 5) **Police Department Hiring Process**
To complete the review of the Department's hiring process with the Police Commission Sub-committee and Executive Officer. Report results to the Police Commission.
- 6) **Department's Overall Staffing**
The Chief of Police shall complete an assessment of the required and recommended number of Police Officers for the Police Department.
- 7) **Professional Development**
Attend a minimum of one professional conference with law enforcement colleagues.
- 8) **Police Officer Survey**
Continue the annual Officer feed-back survey.
- 9) **Social Media**
The Chief of Police shall explore the use of social media for the Police Department.
- 10) **Community Partnerships**
Maintain communication with Town Departments, Boards, Community Coalition and Commissions.

Chairman Reynolds thanked Commissioners Knoche and Coffin who worked on drafting the goals. Commissioner Kain motioned to accept the Chief's Goals; Commissioner Coffin seconded the motion.

Vote: In Favor - All

Chief's Annual Goals for 2014 approved.

Agenda Item #5c Choice of Officer of the Year

Moved to Executive Session

Agenda Item #5d Charter Revision

Major Brown gave a synopsis of the Charter Revision meeting where the proposal was presented that the Chief of Police should report to the First Selectman, as suggested by the Board of Selectmen, for day-to-day operations of the Department. There is no proposed change to the Board of Police Commissioners and their responsibilities will remain the same. Chief Roche added that he had no idea that this topic would be discussed and stated that in his view, the current direct reporting line to the Board of Police Commissioners works well and provides important insulation for the Department and security matters. Chief Roche also stated that he communicates consistently with the Commission members, but also speaks with the First Selectman on a regular basis; the Town is safe with the current system and he does not see it necessary to change the Town Charter.

This reporting change is being introduced for the Planning & Zoning and Parks and Recreation heads also because as Di Masters describes it, these Departments are silos and the Board is looking for 'landscape' as opposed to 'silos'.

All the members of the Commission as well as Major Brown and Chief Roche are strongly opposed to this change and dispute the idea that we are a 'silo' since the Chief is accessible to all at any time, the Police Commission meetings are open meetings that may be attended by the Board of Selectmen and Chief Roche feels that he is communicative and available to any Town department whenever contacted.

Chief Roche continued that First Selectman Marconi stated that he was unable to make a public statement regarding the recent shooting incident involving the Department because he lacked information but that was not a matter of non-communication, it was a matter of State Statute. This particular case is not an RPD case, it is being investigated by the State Police and we are not allowed to comment on another agency's case. The First Selectman and the Commission were given the information that could be released by Chief Roche. Now everyone has to wait for due process – a complete criminal investigation needs to occur and an Internal Affairs investigation needs to be completed before any comments are made by the Department.

Chief Roche stated that Connecticut laws prohibit the police department from releasing protected information, i.e., juvenile names, victim names, etc., to anyone and as a law enforcement agency, we must obey the law and not violate it.

Commissioner Savino stated that the Department is result-oriented, provides the safest Town, has team involvement with actual participation in the schools and does not see where the First Selectman sees accountability lacking.

Commissioner Kain stated that this is not a Charter Revision issue – Rudy Marconi cannot know any more, he was given the information that could be provided the same as the Commissioners. Commissioner Knoche agreed that this is not a Charter issue.

Commissioner Coffin stated that in regard to the shooting incident, nothing happened that would affect Town safety which is where Mr. Marconi would be involved.

Chief Roche stated that he answers to the Police Commission which is an elected body whose members are accountable to the residents of Ridgefield. It is non-political and allows for no police corruption and no political interference; the Department needs to be administered by one independent body.

Commissioner Reynolds stated that he was in touch the Chair of the Charter Revision, Paul Jasinski, who told him that everything to date has been preliminary thoughts and listening on the part of the Charter Commission. On Saturday, March 1, there will be a meeting at 11am where decisions will be made on which items will be pursued and which items will not. Everyone is welcome to go to the meeting. If it is decided to pursue this item with the Department, we would receive a formal invitation to attend the scheduled meeting.

Commissioner Savino and Commissioner Coffin questioned whether it would be beneficial to draft a paper to lay out our concerns and get our thoughts out. Chairman Reynolds stated that he feels it is premature for that step and will wait to see what Saturday's meeting brings forth.

Chief Roche stated that any additional meetings to a submitted schedule need to be posted with the Town Clerk's office. He will check with Town Clerk Serfilippi on any Special Meetings for the Charter Revision Committee.

Commissioner Savino stated that in the minutes of the last Charter meeting, it referred to a one page document that was presented. He asked Major Brown if he had received a copy of that document but Major Brown stated that he did not. Chief Roche will see if he can get the document referred to in the minutes. He also asked Major Brown if the topic of limits of terms for elected officials was brought up and Major Brown stated that it was not.

Agenda Item #6a Training Class

Chief Roche stated that he contacted the State Traffic Administration in reference to setting up a training class for the local traffic authority. Discussion is ongoing to coordinate with the Parks & Recreation and present the class at the recreation

building. Chief Roche will solidify the plans and let the Commissioners know the details.

Commissioner Knoche motioned to adjourn to Executive Session at 7:50pm; Commissioner Coffin seconded the motion. **All in Favor**
Public Meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.

Public Meeting opened at 8:16pm.

Motion by Commissioner Savino to nominate SRO Fernando Luis for the 2013 Police Officer of the Year. This nomination was seconded by Commissioner Kain.
All in Favor
SRO Fernando Luis is the 2013 Officer of the Year.

Commissioner Knoche motioned to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:19pm; Commissioner Kain seconded the motion. **All in Favor**
Public Meeting adjourned at 8:19pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Coffin
Secretary

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

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

Also Present: Chief John Roche
Major Stephen Brown

Executive Session commenced at 7:50pm.

Executive Session adjourned at 8:16 pm to Public Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Coffin
Secretary