



EAST HAVEN DEPARTMENT OF POLICE SERVICES

471 NORTH HIGH STREET • EAST HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06512

Mayor Joseph A. Carfora



Honorable Board of
Police Commissioners

HONORABLE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS

MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

FEBRUARY 27, 2024 AT 7:00 PM

471 NORTH HIGH STREET

EAST HAVEN, CT

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairman Dominic Balletto (presiding), Vice Chairman Joseph DiSilvestro, Commissioner Paul Carbo, Commissioner Dianne Romans, Commissioner Barbara Barbuito

ALSO PRESENT: Chief Edward Lennon, Deputy Chief Patrick Tracy, Clerk Marsha Maldonado, Alberta Vitale, Don Thomas, Stacy Gravino, Town Councilpersons

Chairman Balletto called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Moment of Silence
3. Roll Call - Clerk Maldonado - quorum obtained.
4. Announcement(s)
5. Consider and act upon the approval of the Monthly Meeting minutes of January 30, 2024
Vice Chairman DiSilvestro made a motion to accept and approve the Monthly Meeting minutes of January 30, 2024, as received; seconded by Commissioner Barbuito. All in favor. No one opposed or abstained. Motion carried unanimously.
6. Consider and act upon the approval of the Monthly Reports (February 2024)
Vice Chairman DiSilvestro made a motion to accept and approve the monthly reports as received; seconded by Commissioner Romans. All in favor. No one opposed or abstained. Motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chairman DiSilvestro made a motion to add "Election of Board Officers" under New Business, 12.b.; seconded by Commissioner Romas. All in favor. No one opposed or abstained. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Consider and act upon Committee Reports & Recommendations

8. Public Comment

a. Attorney Alberta Vitale, Registrar of Voters (7 Park Place)

- i. Mrs. Vitale reviewed the minutes from the last BOPC meeting noting that her request for the installation of a panic button at her desk was deferred to the Mayor's office and she respectfully disagrees with the decision, *"the reason being is because I feel that the department of homeland security issued the alert and they're a law enforcement agency, and therefore I think that this is a matter that should involve the recommendation of the police department, or the decision of the police department. As an elected official, I do feel that my personal safety is under threat with respect to- especially considering this is a presidential election year and that there has been a lot of violence surrounding previous elections. So, I don't agree with the decision and I'm requesting that you reconsider. I have put my comments in writing, so I have a copy of the letter for each of you. The attachments are really just the previous correspondence which I've only made a copy of for your clerk because you all have it from the last time."* She distributed the letter to the Board.

She went on to say that this is a very part-time position, "my office is staffed for 19.5 hours a week by a clerk. I am in the office for some of the time, but with flexibility, during the week while she's there and I'm there after those hours. There's a button at her desk but I do not use her desk, I have my own desk. I do find that people often find their way into my office because they cannot stand out in the hallway because of the way the Finance department door opens - but the door opens out right directly into the doorway to our office so people that come to visit we can't put them behind a service counter, they usually end up stepping inside of the office. So that's part of my concern, that I can't block them out but even if I did and they gained access, I have nobody there around me. I'm often working alone and sometimes I'm actually in the building alone; now the doors are locked but still I am not 100% sure that someone wouldn't gain access to an unlocked door that I'm not aware of. I've been there in the evening, very early morning, I work around the rest of my schedule. I am just concerned about it, and I would really appreciate your consideration with respect to this matter."

- ii. She and Chief Lennon have corresponded with respect to police coverage for the presidential election and primary. She's asking that the Chief and the BOPC begin contemplating the police coverage pursuant to election law for the federal presidential election in November (she distributed copies of election law to the Board). Commissioner Carbo asked Mrs. Vitale what her expectations were for police protection on election day. Ideally, she would like an officer at every polling place. Chief Lennon responded to Mrs. Vitale via email November 16, 2023, that our intention is to meet in February/March with both registrars. We do have a plan for the election that he will not discuss in public. We are duly well aware and have had training on these specific statutes regarding respecting people's first amendment rights and such.

Chairman Balletto asked former Clerk Stacy Gravino if it was true in the past that there had been police officers at each location or if there was a situation. She replied, *"If there were a situation they would be but we had tried in 2020 to get police officers at each polling place to be stationed there but there was a little pushback from the Chief concerning having somebody inside the polling place and he didn't want to put an officer in there even though the Secretary of the State said that that is acceptable, that's fine, because we were worried about an altercation occurring and whether or not to go outside, because then it went to having a police officer stationed outside in the car, and then it went to, 'well, we'll just have a police officer drive by' and our thing was always if there was a situation occurring in the polling place, 1) if the police officer's outside then somebody has to run to get the police officer outside to come in - you know, that's giving another length of time for the altercation whatever's occurring to expound even further. And then if the police officer wasn't stationed outside then you'd have to call 911 and hope that a police officer was close enough to come and handle the situation. So, ideally, it would be beneficial to have a police officer right there so that the voters know that everybody is watching out for their safety, for everybody's safety, for the poll workers' safety."*

Chairman Balletto recognized that Ms. Gravino has been doing this for a bit and asked if it was common that there were situations at the polling place or is it rare in East Haven? She replied, *"Things happen. People do get heated especially if they don't want their names read, they don't want their addresses read, and so people do get a little confrontational."* Mrs. Vitale commented that they've occasionally had a confrontation between a poll worker and an elector. She introduced the Deputy Registrar, Don Thomas, who has been involved in the elections for more than twenty years so he could probably provide some perspective.

Mr. Thomas wanted to focus on the first topic - the main topic is the most pertinent but since he was asked, there have been confrontations. He spoke about an incident at Town Hall when a voter was very upset thinking that his vote wasn't going to be counted, and the women were very scared, so Mr. Thomas was able to diffuse the situation, clear things up and get the voter on his way. It is not unheard of that something unusual happens when people are frustrated, irate and tired.

Mr. Thomas is most concerned with the first topic (the panic button). Not only is he the Deputy Registrar, *"this is also my wife. She's at Town Hall and she's in this office all by herself. People come and go, you don't know who it is, and there are instances where people wander in that office and they get irate, and it's not even an election day, it's something else and they get upset. And there's no way that she can get to that button, and honestly even if there were a button, that anything's really going to help her. I'm really kind of scared and a button would give us a little peace of mind, and I tend to agree with my wife's assessment that referring it to the Mayor's office is inappropriate - I believe it should be handled by this Commission or by the police department to at least not install the button but to direct the Mayor's office - not suggest, not ask - direct the Mayor's office to install the button. We've asked the Mayor's office to install the button, we've gotten nowhere and that's why we came to you. Thank you very much."*

Ms. Gravino added that when she was Town Clerk, *“Chief Lennon had gone to the mayor’s office and designated the tax office, the assessor’s office, and the Town Clerk’s office as soft targets and as such insisted that cameras be put into each office so now that we’re hearing that it’s the Town Hall’s responsibility for the safety, I’m a little confused as to that because safety does come from the police department, and I would think as Mr. Thomas just said, it is paramount that the police department oversees the safety of, not only the people that go into Town Hall, but the people that work in Town Hall, so I would wholeheartedly suggest that they tell the Mayor’s office indeed a second panic button should be put in the office.”*

Vice Chairman DiSilvestro asked Mrs. Vitale if she had a statute that says the police department can direct the Mayor to install such a button. She didn’t look for one but would imagine with respect to there being a relationship, there could be that advice given.

Mrs. Vitale asked if there had been any correspondence to the Mayor’s office since her visit last month and has there been a response. Clerk Maldonado sent a letter and there hasn't been a response. As the interested party, Mrs. Vitale requested a copy of that correspondence.

In lieu of what it would cost to put a police officer [at each polling location], Commissioner Carbo asked if there had been any consideration or the budget for private security at each of the polling places. Mrs. Vitale stated that their budget has already been submitted and she did not know that private security was even a possibility. Chief Lennon does not believe it is covered by the statute nor can they possess weapons on school grounds. Mrs. Vitale stated that appointees are permitted to resolve a dispute and then in the statute, it says a police officer. She went on to say that there are seven polling places plus polling is now happening at Town Hall so in addition to election day there is now early voting for the potential total of 28 days this year: 4 days during the primaries, 10 days during a potential state primary in August, and 14 days during the presidential election. Commissioner Carbo asked Chief Lennon if there were enough retired police officers that can be hired. The Chief explained that pursuant to the police Collective Bargaining Agreement, full-time officers have the first right of refusal when hiring for extra duty. Mrs. Vitale said that there was a possibility that if the volume for early voting were high enough, they could open a second location but right now that is not on the table - they would have to continue to evaluate as the election [inaudible] proceeds.

b. Several Members of Town Council:

Guy Bimonte, District 5 - Same as last meeting, they get a lot of complaints from all the districts that people are speeding and going through stop signs. Just around town, the last two weeks, things have been ramping up, he’s seen it himself - the pickup truck and a couple of other cars with the readers - they’re doing a great job but it seems like it slacked off a bit - he does not know if this is being addressed full force but they are getting a lot of pushback from people saying that people go by school buses. Chairman Balletto assured Councilman Bimonte that traffic enforcement is out there, they’ve been repositioned in strategic spots even while doing their [paper]work. Unfortunately, they cannot be

everywhere, and he cited several examples of traffic violations he has witnessed and experienced himself. There is no explanation for people's disregard for traffic laws. Chief Lennon has increased visibility throughout town and will keep it up. Chairman Balletto thanked the Chief and Department for stepping up and moving around, and all the hard work they do - it's appreciated very much.

On behalf of Councilperson Karen Martin (who could not attend), Councilman Bimonte was wondering about patrol in the beach area. Ms. Martin told him that people are parking at will - he doesn't know, he doesn't live down there but maybe the fines are not high enough to deter them. Chief Lennon stated that beach permitting does not kick in until May 15 and has been very effective since implementation several years ago. Ms. Martin is looking to put something in place so that when the beach season ramps up there will be something in place. DC Tracy added that the last three (3) beach seasons, we have had at least one (1) full-time patrol officer designated to beach patrol and safety concerns. He believes that Councilperson Martin has been involved in those conversations, perhaps not, but we have had personnel in place. Commissioner Carbo further mentioned that a lot of work has gone into addressing the concerns at the beach, noting that Town Council Chairman Deko was intimately involved in the improvements; in fact, Town ordinances were revised, and fines were increased at the behest of the Town Council. Chairman Balletto commented that, shockingly, the permit parking program has been successful - it has been much better than anyone expected.

Susan Stacey, District 4 - After the last accident on Forbes Place, a lot of the neighbors came back around talking about speed bumps, so she is letting the Board know. Chairman Balletto reminded her that the funding for speed bumps comes from the Town Council.

Albert Vollano, District 5 - Councilperson Vollano asked how much revenue was generated from parking fines and if it goes back to the police department. Chief Lennon stated that ticket revenue (we do not know the amount offhand) goes into the General Fund and DC Tracy explained that ticket revenue is purposely separated - it should not be a revenue source for a police department, and it should not be a motivator or detractor for enforcement.

9. Correspondence Received/Sent

10. Department Updates (Chief Lennon)

a. Personnel Matters/Injured Employees

- i. One (1) officer on light duty.
- ii. One (1) officer vacancy.
- iii. Recruit Salgado, who was hired last month, will start at the Hartford Police Academy on March 4 so his start date was moved up to February 26.

b. Overtime - Up mostly due to proactive enforcement, prisoner watch/risk protection orders and an increase in light duty assignments which is a variable that cannot be predicted.

c. Awards & Commendations

d. Noteworthy News

11. Old Business

a. Frank Bzdyra (157 Short Beach Road), *from January 30, 2024 meeting:*

Request for the Traffic & Public Safety Committee to take action to review the area (Route 142 at the intersection of Stone Pillar Road and the entrance of Farm River State Park) for the installation of a pedestrian crosswalk for public safety and then make such a recommendation to the Connecticut Department of Transportation for the installment.

In his capacity on the Traffic and Public Safety committee, Vice Chairman DiSilvestro surveyed the area, which is a state road, so we have no jurisdiction. It would entail more than painting lines and with the grade of the hill, putting a crosswalk here could be a disaster. Chairman Balletto and the other commissioners agreed. Therefore, VC DiSilvestro made a recommendation to take no action; seconded by Commissioner Romans. All in favor. No one opposed or abstained. Motion carried unanimously.

12. New Business

a. Discussion and approval of revised policies 411.5 (Police Vehicle Operations); 414.9 (Motorized Pursuits); 415.9 (Domestic Violence)

Vice Chairman DiSilvestro made a motion to approve revised policy 411.5 (Police Vehicle Operations) effective March 5, 2024; seconded by Commissioner Romans. All in favor. No one opposed or abstained. Motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chairman DiSilvestro made a motion to approve revised policy 414.9 (Motorized Pursuits) effective March 5, 2024; seconded by Commissioner Barbutto. All in favor. No one opposed or abstained. Motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chairman DiSilvestro made a motion to approve revised policy 415.9 (Domestic Violence) effective March 5, 2024; seconded by Commissioner Romans. All in favor. No one opposed or abstained. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Election of Board Officers

Commissioner Romans nominated Dominic Balletto as Chairman; seconded by Vice Chairman DiSilvestro. No other nominations. All in favor. No one opposed or abstained. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Balletto: *"I want to thank everyone. I've served on an awful lot of committees/commissions over the years, and this I have to say that is one of the best. Not only do I enjoy working with everybody, all five of us work very well together - we very rarely disagree on any issue; if we do, we usually come to a consensus. I actually don't think of any time the last year or so that we haven't come to consensus. Everybody's ability and understanding of the town of East Haven. You've all be great. Commissioner Carbo's been great at lending his institutional knowledge being around for a little bit, we appreciate that very much. Again, I want to thank everybody - the staff, the department's actually excellent;*

they work so hard, the Chief and the Deputy Chief have been great in responding to our requests. I'm very proud to be part of this Board which oversees the department. You guys have made us all look very, very good and the Town of East Haven. I want to thank you very, very much. It's been a pleasure to serve with you."

Chairman Balletto thanked Clerk Maldonado for everything that she does to support the Board.

Commissioner Barbuito nominated Joseph DiSilvestro as Vice Chairman; seconded by Commissioner Romans. No other nominations. All in favor. No one opposed or abstained. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Balletto nominated Marsha Maldonado as the Clerk; seconded by Commissioner Romans. No other nominations. All in favor. No one opposed or abstained. Motion carried unanimously.

13. Adjournment

Vice Chairman DiSilvestro made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Commissioner Romans. All in favor. Chairman Balletto adjourned the meeting at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marsha M. Maldonado
Clerk to the Honorable Board of Police Commissioners