



**WATERTOWN POLICE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

**WATERTOWN TOWN HALL
61 ECHO LAKE ROAD
WATERTOWN, CT
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2023 - 7:00 P.M.**

1. Convene Regular Meeting
Vice Chair David Jannetty called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Richard Antonetti, Chairman (phone)
David Jannetty, V. Chairman
Richard Rossi, Secretary
Jamie Hobart Lambo
Robert McCarthy

ABSENT:

ALTERNATES Ronald Russ
PRESENT: Carmine Verno

ALTERNATES
ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief
Renee Dominguez, Deputy Chief
Mark Raimo, Town Manager
Mary Ann Rosa, Town Council
Robert Desena, Town Council
Gary Lafferty, Town Council

Carmine Verno sat in as a regular member of the commission.

3. Public Participation

Frank Genova, 104 Pleasant View Avenue asked for an update in regards to the rear gate at the Watertown High School being closed.

Vice Chair David Jannetty answered we did vote on that a couple months ago at our regular meeting and we did advise the Superintendent to keep the gate shut but we also gave them the authority, the Superintendent and the Principal of the school the authority to open the gate under certain circumstances. So that gate should remain closed on a regular basis unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Mark Severino, 318 Bayview Circle talked about the four-way intersection of Bayview, Killorin Road and Wheeler Farm Road with vehicles not stopping at the stop sign at the intersection. Mr. Severino had concerns for residents and children's safety and asked for safety measures to be put in place.

Angela Barbieri 2298 Bayview Circle talked about the intersection of Bayview, Killorin Road and Wheeler Farm Road witnessing cars, trucks, work vans and other vehicles going through a stop sign without hesitation, ignoring the stop sign at an alarming speed. Ms. Barbieri had concerns for residents and children playing in the area. She has walked with her children and baby with vehicles not stopping and stated it is not safe. She asked that something be done for safety.

Al Mickel, 95 Woodvine Avenue asked the commission to send a message be sent to the Town Council supporting the Police Chief's request for 3 police officers.

Vice Chair David Jannetty answered we have already done that.

4. Minutes Approval

a. Regular Meeting – February 8, 2023

Motion: Richard Rossi seconded by Robert McCarthy to accept meeting minutes of February 8, 2023

Aye: 3 Jannetty, Rossi, McCarthy

Nay: 0

Abstain: 2 Antonetti, Lambo

Motion passes

5. Correspondence

Joshua Bernegger read 3 emails sent in regards to the intersection of Bayview, Killorin and Wheeler Farm Road.

-Noel Germain of Bayview Circle

-Denise Keene of Wheeler Farm Road

-Danielle Vitale of 262 Bayview Circle

Vice Chair David Jannetty added this will be added to agenda under New Business for the April 2023 meeting.

6. New Business
 - a. Presentation by the Center for Policy Equity – Report on the Watertown Police Department.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief stated in February of 2019 the Watertown Police Department initiated a partnership with a non-profit organization, the Center for Policing Equity. This relationship was sought after in the spirit of complete transparency and the Watertown's commitment to self-reflection and learning. Our mission statement here at Watertown Police Department is to "to provide the Watertown/Oakville Community with exemplary law enforcement services strengthened through community partnerships transparency and an unyielding commitment performed to the highest standards". This presentation will detail the Watertown Police Department shared 8 years of data with CPE covering the years 2013 through 2020 presenting their findings.

Mark Raimo, Town Manager wanted to thank the Watertown Police Department with all the hard work they do under the leadership of Deputy Chief Dominguez and Chief Bernegger. What I took away from these conversations mostly was that it was open and honest communication which gave us better understanding of what possible issues could arise if we don't pay attention.

Ileana Mendoza, Senior Community Engagement Coordinator thanked the Watertown Police Department and Police Commission for the invitation to the meeting and introduced the panelists for the presentation and what they will be discussing.

Evan Riddick, Implementation Strategist thanked everyone involved and gave a background on himself and explained what CPE is committed to with change through actions backed by data, research, working alongside communities and law enforcement agencies. CPE analyzed data provided from October 2013 to December 2020 and calls for service with officer activities from January 1, 2014 to July 1, 2020.

Matthew Graham, Senior Data Analyst walked through some of the key findings reviewing stats with departmental context, vehicle stops percentages given were equal across the board with racial groups and in synch with the demographics of the town, search rates by racial groups showed Black and Latinx drivers were searched 4 times as often as opposed to white drivers in their findings. He also showed the stats for the number of calls for service that officers responded to.

Evan Riddick, Implementation Strategist talked about the next steps to strengthen data collection.

Ileana Mendoza, Senior Community Engagement Coordinator talked about community engagement with CPE.

Question and answer session.

Mark Raimo, Town Manager asked Mr. Graham in the stats one of the key findings that was stated in here was that black drivers were searched 4.2 times as often as white drivers and asked if there a cut off on age where it equals or starts to equal. Are younger black drivers more prone to be stopped and then that changes as the age group escalates.

Matthew Graham, Senior Data Analyst answered we do not break down that analysis by gender or by age and we can follow up on it as we continue to follow up on that partnership with you.

Al Mickel, 95 Woodvine Avenue stated I assume the data for the traffic stops counted is for only Watertown residents or did it count everybody that was stopped.

Matthew Graham, Senior Data Analyst answered the data showed anyone stopped by the Watertown Police Department.

Al Mickel asked so it doesn't recognize what's happening to our residents then. I can assume that because we live right next to a very large city.

Mary Ann Rosa, Town Council stated concerns about the rise in crime in Waterbury and how close it is in the Oakville section of town. Ms. Rosa asked if there is any way at all that it can be taken into consideration with a town our size, the number of traffic stops might be unusually high or the calls for assistance of a particular nature are not in line with the number of residents. Are we getting some overflow numbers from a city close by.

Matthew Graham, Senior Data Analyst answered we don't typically compare cities against each other we are really interested in assessing your community and hopefully continuing our partnership and assessing progress over time.

Vice Chair David Jannetty guests who are attending virtually through Zoom if you could please raise your hand and your mic will be turned on and you will be allowed to ask a question.

Roland Blanchard, 37 Booth Avenue agreed with Ms. Rosa, that we are getting an overflow from other communities it would be interesting to see what the time of day these stops were made and the age group as the Town Manager said. He added the Lions Club has been in existence for 74 years about the same time that the Police Department became organized and enjoyed a great relationship with the Police Department and found the women and men of the Watertown Police Department to be intelligent, articulate, well-trained, well equipped their community relations. He thought this was a good thing and again congratulated the Chief and the Deputy Chief for pursuing this and hopes it continues.

Vice Chair David Jannetty stated now that we have identified potential areas of concern, we want to come up with solutions for long term. Can someone from the CPE speak to how that relationship will work and what other services will be offered.

Evan Riddick, Implementation Strategist answered we would like to give your community the tools and this report to have those conversations moving forward. We can identify some policies that can be possibly changed to identify how we can push equitable policing forward and give some ideas.

Vice Chair David Jannetty asked how will the community be involved going forward.

Evan Riddick, Implementation Strategist answered we have a community engagement team that identifies organizations.

Vice Chair David Jannetty I will follow up with Chief Bernegger at this time for some follow-up comments.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief gave comments on the research found for motor vehicle stops and would be very interested in the continuing relationship we have with CPE.

Evan Riddick - Implementation Strategist, Ileana Mendoza - Senior Community Engagement Coordinator, and Matthew Graham - Senior Data Analyst gave closing statements.

Vice Chair David Jannetty added one final comment that he would like to see some data from members of the public to see how they feel they have been policed and wanted to look at more crime data. Mr. Jannetty wanted to thank the Chief and Deputy Chief for taking on this project and thanked the guests from CPE. A member from CPE is here in attendance who folks can see after the meeting.

7. Old Business

a. Update on speed reader locations.

Joshua Bernegger reported there is no update this month our three operable signs remain at Middlebury Road, Park Road near Jericho and Buckingham.

8. Chairman's Report – none.

Vice Chair David Jannetty stated that the Chairman is making a speedy recovery and is convalescing at home and we are hopeful he will be able to attend the next meeting in person.

9. Chief's Report

a. February 2023– Monthly Department Activity Report

Joshua Bernegger reported:

- 1) I am pleased to announce that the Watertown Police Department held a promotional ceremony this afternoon, promoting Sergeant Jared D'Andrea to the rank of Lieutenant

and Corporal Jeffrey McKirryher to the rank of Sergeant. Lieutenant D'Andrea will assume command of the Department's Detective Division, while Sergeant McKirryher will remain assigned to the Professional Standards Division for approximately one year to complete the work required for an upcoming accreditation assessment.

- 2) The Professional Standards Division is currently conducting background investigations on two applicants – one is a new hire who will likely be starting at the police academy on April 6th, and second is a certified officer from another agency.
- 3) The Watertown Police Department's proposed budget was presented to Town Council last week. At this time two additional police officers remain in the proposed budget. I also pleased to inform the commission that the Council has approved the reallocation of ARPA money to fund the Department's red dot optic project. Purchase orders have already been submitted to equipment procurement.

10. Adjournment

Motion: Jamie Horbart Lambo seconded by Robert McCarthy to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 8:13 p.m.

Motion passes unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

David Jannetty, Vice Chair
Watertown Police Commission