



**WATERTOWN POLICE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

**WATERTOWN TOWN HALL
61 ECHO LAKE ROAD
WATERTOWN, CT
WEDNESDAY, April 10, 2024 - 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: David Jannetty, V. Chairman
Richard Rossi, Secretary
Robert McCarthy

ABSENT: Richard Antonetti, Chairman
Jamie Hobart Lambo

ALTERNATES

PRESENT: Carmine Verno

ALTERNATES

ABSENT: Ronald Russ

OTHERS PRESENT: Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief

Carmine Verno sat in a regular member.

3. Public Participation
Al Mickel, 95 Woodvine Avenue – stated he applied for his pistol permit and wanted to honor the woman in the records office, she was very pleasant, knowledgeable and very helpful.

4. Minutes Approval
 - a. Regular Meeting – March 13, 2024

Motion: Robert McCarthy seconded by Carmine Verno to accept meeting minutes of March 13, 2024.

Discussion:

Aye: 3 McCarthy, Rossi, Verno

Nay: 0

Abstain: 1 Jannetty

Motion passes

5. Correspondance – none.
6. New Business – none.

7. Old Business
 - a. Update on DOT action regarding a flashing beacon sign on Woodbury Road, just prior to the intersection with Wolf Hill Road. – there is no further action, they did significant tree trimming there which has increased the site line significantly. Before the next meeting I will see if I can get an answer, the situation there was a lot better than it was.

Robert McCarthy asked if the state was going to put the white traffic lines across from Taft School?

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered that has been brought up to the state at least twice since I started employment here in 2019. They have denied that request both times and they will not put any paint on the shoulder of the breakdown lane. They put in a much larger “no turn on red” sign at our request.

Robert McCarthy asked has there been a lot of complaints regarding panhandling in Watertown?

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered we have very few complaints. I know we get some panhandling complaints at the end of Stop & Shop driveway and occasionally down at the end of the exit 37 ramp.

Robert McCarthy asked if there would be a necessity for an ordinance.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered it is not against the law to panhandle in the state statuette. If the panhandler starts causing any type of disturbance or interjecting himself in disrupting traffic, we can certainly address that.

Vice Chair David Jannetty stated he is filling in for Chairman Antonetti as he is absent tonight, taking over the duties as Chair.

b. Discussion pertaining to “School Zones”. – the Police Chief provided 5 years of traffic data on accidents around our schools and specifically during school hours.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief stated we did a five-year lookback on all accidents within the immediate vicinity of our five public schools. As far as the high school goes on French Street with a speed limit of 25 mph over the past five years there were four minor rear end crashes at the light, two of them was during school hours. At Polk Primary School with two surrounding streets, one being French Street posted at 25mph having no crashes and on Buckingham Street which is state owned with a 35-mph speed posted, there were five minor crashes, two of which were during school hours. Swift Middle School we have Davis Street and Colonial Street border the school property with a speed limit posted of 25 mph with no crashes on either roadway in the last five years. Judson Primary School we have two town owned roads Hamilton Avenue and Hamilton Lane. Hamilton Avenue is post with 30 mph and Hamilton Lane at 25 mph with no crashes over the last five years. John Trumbull there are two roadways that border the property, state owned Buckingham having a speed limit sign of 45 mph, having 3 accidents over 5 years. None of which were during school hours. Echo Lake Road is assigned at 35 mph having no crashes there. Mr. Bernegger also stated most of the enforcement history of the schools is centered around Judson School in the last number of months because of the Rural Roads Grant received from Federal DOT with a lot of radar in the Judson vicinity because of that grant. Other than that, we have had very little enforcement action taken around the schools in the last five years.

Vice Chair David Jannetty asked the Police Chief what the sign would say or is required?

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered if the LTA elects to do so by an affirmative vote, we can establish a school zone in the immediate vicinity of the school property. Just prior to the school property that says “school zone fines doubled” and at the inclusion of the property a sign that says “end of school zone”. In between those two school signs all traffic moving violations fines would be doubled. There does not need to be flashing lights along that line, if we are not changing the speed limit there. If the LTA wishes to reduce or increase to modify the speed limit there would have to be an application to the DOT’s office of the State Traffic Administration for approval.

Vice Chair David Jannetty stated it seems like through the traffic data supports the speed limits on what they need to be, there is not a lot of speeding going on.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered I would agree with you if we put the signs up, it would bring further awareness to drivers in that area to slow down it is a school zone and the penalties would be much greater. I would have no issue with the approval of signs for a safer environment around the schools. As far as the state roads go, by an affirmative vote of the local LTA, we can submit an application to the State Office of the Traffic Engineering Department who would approve any school zone zones on state roads. If it involves the reduction of speed during school hours generally it has to then go through the Traffic Administration which usually requires the flashing beacons that say when flashing the speed limit is on, fines doubled and the flashing beacons are costly.

Carmine Verno asked in the school if the car speeds by parked buses that are there, is it for one instance of the violation or by each bus they pass.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered technically for each bus they pass, we would fine for a single bus.

Robert McCarthy asked are these in effect all the time of the school zone.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered the LTA may be able to have the school zones established only during certain times of the day but that would be summer as well. To make it when school is in session would be to have flashing beacons that activate when school is in session and again that gets very costly. Generally, the police enforce and double the fines when school is in session.

Vice Chair David Jannetty I would add outside of school hours you see children using school property for playgrounds, sports and so on it still would not hurt to have that in effect all the time.

Motion: Carmine Verno seconded by Robert McCarthy to establish school zones for Watertown High School, Swift Middle School and Judson School.

Motion passed unanimously

Motion: Carmine seconded by Richard Rossi Verno to respectfully ask the Chief to apply to the state to establish school zones at Polk, St. John's, St. Mary Magdalen and John Trumbull Schools since they are under the authority of the State Traffic Engineering Office.

Motion passed unanimously

8. Chairman's Report: none.

9. Chief's Report

a. March 2024– Monthly Department Activity Report

Joshua Bernegger reported:

- 1) Watertown Police Department's sworn ranks are fully staffed with 42 members. Of these 42 members, 1 is in the academy and will graduate on April 17th. One additional member is on maternity duty, and one member has been on injury leave for the last month.
- 2) The Watertown Police Department partnered with Southern Connecticut State University and our very own Sun, Moon & Stars autism group to host a "mock traffic stops" session at Watertown High School on Saturday, April 6th. Waterbury and Naugatuck Police Departments assisted with the event as well. 23 participants registered for the event and provided positive feedback about their experience.
- 3) The Watertown Police Department continues to participate in several traffic-related grants, including Rural Roads Speed Enforcement, Driving Under the Influence, MV Theft/Crime Suppression, Click-it or Ticket, and Distracted Driving.

Joshua Bernegger informed the commission on the signage that was approved for Commercial Street for "no overnight parking" signs and "no trucker trailer parking" signs have been installed last week. It will give the police the authority to ticket or remove any vehicles that are parked there overnight to keep the large truck and trailer parking off Commercial Street.

The signage was also installed on Bunker Hill Road in the area of Barnes signifying that there is an intersection ahead.

The speed limit signs still has not yet been adjusted on Middlebury Road to 30 mph. I will be touching base with Public Works to see what their plan is with that. I think they may be waiting until after the reconstruction for the road before they put the signage up.

10. Adjournment

Motion: Carmine Verno seconded by Robert McCarthy to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Motion passes unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

David Jannetty
Vice Chair