

Norwalk Board of Police Commissioners

**Mayor Harry W. Rilling
Commissioner Fran Collier-Clemmons
Commissioner Kelly Straniti**

CITY OF NORWALK BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING JANUARY 25, 2021

ATTENDANCE: Mayor Harry Rilling; Commissioner Collier-Clemmons; Commissioner Straniti

STAFF: Chief Thomas Kulhawik; Deputy Chief Susan Zecca; Deputy Chief James Walsh

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 4:27PM. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF DECEMBER 21, 2020.

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 21, 2020 AS PRESENTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Levin

Mr. Levin stated that a lot of people had a chance to look at recent events reported about the Norwalk Police Department and find much of the reporting disturbing, and it raises a lot of questions and he is hoping the questions he presented in an email to the commissioners will be addressed. He said he would be pleased if any of the questions can be answered at this meeting through the public comment portion of the meeting.

Mayor Rilling said the normal protocol is to respond to the email with an email but he will respond to the questions regarding the size of the Police Commission. He said that several years ago there was an item on the charter revision to increase the size of the police commission from three to five members and the item was defeated and did not pass. Mr. Levin said he recognizes that and that his question was is there any reason not to increase the size of the police commission from three to five members. Mayor Rilling said that would have to be up to the voters but he does not see why that can't be considered but said this commission is in close

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contact with the department if not daily on a weekly basis, and he feels that the Police Chief and the Deputy Chiefs have handled this unfortunate and horrible situation in a proper way.

Mr. Levin asked what the status of the union contract because the one on the city's website had expired last June. Mayor Rilling said that the contract has been extended and the old contract remains in full force until a new one is negotiated. He said the website will need to be updated. Mayor Rilling said that there will be a response to the rest of Mr. Levin's questions that were provided in an email to the Police Commission and the email will be made a part of this meeting.

Larry Losio

Mr. Losio stated that he and Mr. Levin are neighbors and friends and he shares the same concerns that Mr. Levin had addressed in his email. He said he would think that the Norwalk Police Department as well as the Commission would like to consider the facts of the earnings and the context of the Norwalk Police Departments culture and how these earnings might affect the way in which Norwalk citizens are protected. He said being a police officer is a role of public service and when earnings reach the point that they have for 17 of the 25 officer's highest earners those earnings are two and half to three times the average 2019 Connecticut household income of \$78,000. He said he finds that there is a risk for the culture of the Norwalk Police Department that could leave officers thinking more about earnings than on public service and asked the commission to consider that as a possibility. He also said as far as public perception the risk of having earnings at this level may have a risk in the minds of the public that the NPD might be viewed as a special class which will put additional distance between NPD and the citizens.

RECOGNITION

December Officers of the Month: Officer Konstantine Arvanitakis; Officer Max Sixto, and Officer Hector Delgado

Chief Kulhawik said that there was an incident on December 22, 2020, where while Officer Arvanitakis was patrolling he had observed a car in a driveway which appeared to be suspicious to him, as the driver passed by him he noticed he was on his cell phone and as a result he had conducted a motor vehicle stop and with the assistance of one of the police dogs located over 40 grams of cocaine that was packaged for sale and 8 ½ grams of heroin which also tested positive for fentanyl.

Chief Kulhawik said that we normally host a holiday party at Columbus Magnet School from the Community Police Unit but due to the Covid-19 restrictions could not be held this year but Officer Sixto and Officer Delgado spearheaded "stuff the cruiser" and had collected hundreds of toys and personally distributed them around the community.

Chief Kulhawik said that someone who would like to remain anonymous had purchased \$100 gift cards from Stew Leonard's to be distributed to needy families and Officer Sixto and Officer Delgado

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had personally delivered them to 150 needy families. He said they went above and beyond of what community policing and a commitment to the community.

(The commissioners offered the officers congratulations)

Mayor Rilling said we were all shocked by the incident involving the officers that subsequently ended up getting them arrested and being charged for what they did. We thought this was a disgraceful act on their behalf but they are being dealt with in an appropriate way and he had all the confidence in the way the department handled the situation and it was not “swept under the carpet” and the department did what they had to do. He said what these officers did in no way, shape or form reflects upon the Norwalk Police Department and the men and women of the Norwalk Police Department are dedicated hardworking professionals that do a job that many would not do for three times the salary that they get. He said the Police Commission have total confidence in the Norwalk Police Department and Chief Kulhawik will respond to the letter regarding the number of hours that an officer works and there are restrictions in the contract that an officer cannot work anymore the 16 hours in any 24 hour period.

Commissioner Straniti said it is unfortunate that people look to jump to judgement and cast a cloud over the whole department. She said maybe if more people from the public participated in our meetings and listened to all of what goes on and all the work that is done including the training on a regular basis. She said what happened was an unfortunate incident but the department has dealt with it in a professional manner.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons said that our police department could have easily ignored this for the time in which it happened but because of the high standards that the Norwalk Police Department has they addressed it and investigated it like they would for any other violation by any other citizen and came up with the results and did what was necessary, and are following protocol and procedure as they have been trained to do. We have a very professional Police Department that has high ethics and standards and there are things both personally and professionally that will not be tolerated and she is proud to be a commissioner for this department.

Civilian Award- Walter Martinez

Chief Kulhawik said we would like to publically recognize a business owner in town. He said that Walter Martinez owns Smart Signs on First Street and for some time the community police unit have reached out to him and his business to provide the sandwich boards for Coffee with a Cop, open houses National Night Out, the banners for Stuff a Cruiser etc. at a very low rate and this year did not even charge for the banners for the Stuff a Cruiser so for his ongoing support for the department and the community we wanted to recognize him and will be sending him a certificate.

(The commissioners offered Mr. Martinez congratulations)

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OPERATIONS REPORT

Patrol Staffing

Deputy Chief Walsh reported and said for the month of December there were currently 175 sworn personnel with six patrolmen vacancies and Officer Brent Crawford is still on a leave of absence. He said the sworn personnel used 203.75 sick days, 61.5 workers compensations days. Deputy Chief Walsh said the activity in the Detective Bureau was slow for the month of December and there were only three burglaries of motor vehicles which is tremendously slower than has been seen in the previous months.

Deputy Chief Walsh said that Special Services activity was also slow for the month of December but they have been assisting the Board of Health with Covid-19 enforcement. He said they also started a compliance operation targeting underage individuals targeting the vape shops and have been successful in getting underage purchases and the enforcement will continue with those operations.

Deputy Chief Walsh said the Special Victims Unit was also slow for the month and the domestic violence cases dropped and in December 2019 there were 42 and in December 2020 there were 29 and they have two current sexual assault investigations that are ongoing.

Deputy Chief Walsh said that as Chief Kulhawik noted Officers Sixto and Delgado were very busy with the toy collection as well as Sergeant Gulino.

Deputy Chief Walsh said the total criminal arrests for December was 189 and the calls for service for the total division was 4,334.

Deputy Chief Walsh said there were 79 tickets issued for Selective Enforcement which has been low, but we have made some personnel changes in the traffic enforcement unit so the numbers will start to come back up and we have already seen a significant progress in enforcement in the month of January 2021. He said the total amount of tickets there were issued in 2020 was 1,166 which is down tremendously from 2019 by an average of approximately 65% but that is consistent with other states and jurisdictions.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons thanked Deputy Chief Walsh for again including the motor vehicle citations for the month in his report.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Training Report- December

Deputy Chief Zecca reported and said for the month there was mostly standard review training and had an Emergency Responder medical class for being medical first responders which needs to be recertified every few years. She said we continued the firearms qualifications and review credit training for mental health aid for law enforcement and motor vehicle stops. There were some that needed to recertify in N.C.I.C which is the computer check system and two officers also recertified for their Taser instruction as well as certifying some of the officers in the annual

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Taser re-certifications. She said in the next couple of months she anticipates finishing up this review credit cycle which has been extended due to Covid-19.

Mayor Rilling requested a public presentation regarding the content of the training that the officers receive in the areas of human relations, racial sensitivity etc. so that people can understand not only what training our officers receive in the academy, but also on an ongoing basis to be sure we are prescribing to the highest standards of law enforcement services.

Mayor Rilling added that our own Police Chief was not only an onsite assessor for the Commission on Accreditation which entails going around the country evaluating other police departments and making sure they subscribe to the standards on the commission on accreditation for law enforcement agencies and because he had done such a great job has also now be elevated to the Commissioner. He requested at a future meeting that Chief Kulhawik give a presentation at what the Commission on Accreditation process actually is and all the things that the Norwalk Police Department has subscribed to since 1995 when the department was first accredited and has maintained accreditation flawlessly ever since.

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO ADD AN ITEM TO THE AGENDA TO REVIEW THE FEES THE DEPARTMENT CHARGES.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Chief Kulhawik said because of technology changes we have had requests for items on a disk and there is no fee structure in place and were charging \$29 per disk based on time and resources. He said the Corporation Councils Office had advised us that the fee is too high compared to other areas and requested that the fee be reviewed which Deputy Chief Zecca has done and found that agencies have reduced the fees and range from the area of \$5.00 to \$10.00 per disk. He said we are requesting to change the fee structure and reduce the fee down to \$5.00 to be in line with what other agencies in the area are charging.

**** COMMISSIONER STRANITI MOVED TO APPROVE TO REDUCE THE FEE FOR A DISK TO \$5.00.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PERSONNEL MATTERS

Mayor Rilling said perhaps the public is not aware of the amount of officers who have higher educations and there are a significant amount of officers that have or are pursuing their Master's Degree in various disciplines. In addition to being accredited and to ongoing training our police department has a significant number of officers with a higher education.

Tuition Reimbursement- Deputy Chief Susan Zecca

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****COMMISSIONER STRANITI MOVED TO APPROVE THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR DEPUTY CHIEF SUSAN ZECCA IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,526.50
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Tuition Reimbursement- Sergeant Rafael Fonseca

**** COMMISSIONER STRANITI MOVED TO APPROVE THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR SERGEANT RAFAEL FONSECA IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,477.88
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Tuition Reimbursement- Officer James Barron

**** COMMISSIONER STRANITI MOVED TO APPROVE THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR OFFICER JAMES BARRON IN THE AMOUNT OF \$2,325.50**

Tuition Reimbursement- Officer Robert Castaldi

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons said that the payment information from the school is missing from the request.

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR OFFICER ROBERT CASTALDI IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,109.32 BASED ON RECEIVING A VERIFYING COPY FROM THE COLLEGE OF HIS TUITION COST.**

Tuition Reimbursement –Officer Daniel Vazquez

**** COMMISSIONER MOVED TO APPROVE THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR OFFICER DANIEL VAZQUEZ IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,445.00**

**** COMMISSIONER STRANITI MOVED TO APPROVE THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR OFFICER DANIEL VAZQUEZ IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,445.00
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Course Approval- Sergeant Ryan Evarts

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Course Approval- Officer Daniel Vazquez

****COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE COURSE APPROVAL FOR SERGEANT RYAN EVARTS AND OFFICER DANIEL VAZQUEZ.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

2020 Sick Time Attendance

Chief Kulhawik discussed the list of officers and civilian staff that did not take any sick time last year or further and they have all received letters of behalf of himself and the commission thanking them.

Complimentary Letters

Chief Kulhawik said he received a complimentary email from Jennifer Mendez of Rowayton Elementary School for Officer Abruzzini who is the School Resource Officer for his excellent work. He said we have received numerous letters about him.

Chief Kulhawik said he received a complimentary letter for Officer Sefcik and praising the department for hiring someone like him and commented on how supportive and helpful he was regarding a traffic accident that had occurred.

Chief Kulhawik said complimentary email from Suzanne Vieux of the State's Attorney's Office for the recognition of Officer Roncinske for an exceptional warrant and his attention to detail.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER- MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 5:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd