

Norwalk Board of Police Commissioners

**Mayor Harry W. Rilling
Commissioner Fran Collier-Clemmons
Commissioner Tony Lopez**

CITY OF NORWALK BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING January 23, 2023

BY VIDEO CONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE

ATTENDANCE: Mayor Rilling; Commissioner Lopez; Commissioner Collier-Clemmons

STAFF: Interim Chief James Walsh; Deputy Chief Susan Zecca; Interim Deputy Chief Terry Blake; Sergeant Kevin Markert

OTHERS: Diane CeCe, Jeffery Spahr

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 4:15PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES- DECEMBER 19, 2022

**** COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.
** THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWO (2) IN FAVOR AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION-
COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Cece said there have been chronic complaints in East Norwalk about serious car racing which has exasperated since the state police took action on racing on the Route 7 connector. She said the complaints have been chronic and she has urged the residents to contact the police department when they hear this activity occurring. Mayor Rilling asked where this is taking place. Ms. Cece said according to the residents it is all over East Norwalk including East Avenue, Winfield Street, and Strawberry Hill Avenue as well as on Norden Place and that it is a tragedy waiting to happen. She said the first concern is whether there is any police response at all when people are phoning in and asked if it is possible, they have police scanners so they know when the police will be responding. Interim Chief Walsh said since last week he has been working with Councilwomen McMurrer as they have also received complaints about drag racing on Norden Place which is currently private property and they have responded to several calls, but most of

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the time the racers flee when they see the police cars. He said they have not received any reports of drag racing on East Avenue or Strawberry Hill Avenue and have been mostly centered on Norden Place. He said in response to this by using JAG grant funding they will have police on site beginning this week to address the drag racing issue in East Norwalk. He said that a lot of the reports come through the text tip line but that delays the response, so he encouraged that the residents call (203) 854-3000. Commissioner Collier-Clemmons also requested that when the incidents are being reported that they include the time of the occurrences.

Ms. Cece said she has not seen any input by either the Traffic Authority or the Police Commission regarding the proposed development on one Cemetery Street and said they are proposing that Cemetery Street be reduced from two lanes to one lane and have on street parking and the proposed changes will also have Gregory Blvd. become a yield going northbound. She said the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association and the residents are very concerned about this and would like to see what the emergency response time would be in terms of any impediments or obstacles if Cemetery Street was reduced to one lane with on street parking. She requested that both the Traffic Authority and the Police Commission weigh in on this application regarding the traffic impacts. Mayor Rilling requested that Interim Chief Walsh contact Planning and Zoning to see what is being proposed. Ms. Cece requested that this be included on a future agenda.

Mr. Spahr spoke in support of the promotions that are on the agenda specifically elevating interim Chief Walsh and Interim Deputy Chief Blake as he has had the distinct privilege working with both of them on a number of matters and he can't speak more highly of their professionalism. He said that Interim Deputy Chief Blake has been called as a witness in a number of cases and is a great asset to the City of Norwalk. He said he has also had the opportunity to work with Interim Chief Walsh and whenever he needs information, he can get it from him day or night and his attention to detail is fantastic.

RECOGNITION- DECEMBER OFFICER OF THE MONTH- DETECTIVE PATRICK ENGLISH

Interim Chief Walsh said in January 2021, Detective English was assigned to a case based on a tip provided by the Department of Children and Families regarding sex trafficking of a juvenile in Norwalk. He said he was assigned the investigation with minimal facts and was able to identify more than one victim as well as the trafficker and solicitor. He said after a lengthy and delicate investigation he was able to gather the cooperation of the victim and develop a case for an arrest and prosecution and want to thank him for his dedication and a job well done.

(The commissioners congratulated Detective English)

OPERATIONS REPORT

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PATROL STAFFING (DECEMBER)

Interim Deputy Chief Blake reported on the patrol staffing for the month of December and said the staffing was at 177 sworn personnel and there are 4 vacancies in patrol. He said a total of 236.25 sick days and 96.75 workers compensation days were used by sworn personnel, and three officers are on long term workers compensation.

SELECTIVE ENFORCEMENT REPORT

Interim Deputy Chief Blake reported on the Detective Bureau activity and said that 45 cases were opened in the month of December and noted that the detectives have determined that over \$780,000 has been stolen as a result of check intercepts and washing and although the cases have begun to somewhat drop it is still going on, and the detectives have three arrest warrants pending for suspects.

Interim Deputy Chief Blake reported on the Special Services activity and said they opened 25 cases and noted that there are several narcotic and fugitive investigations, one non-fatal overdose investigation with the detective bureau, and have been very proactive in the underage tobacco/vape shop compliance operation along with SVU and five shops were checked, and nine infractions were issued for underage sales.

Interim Deputy Chief Blake reported on the Special Victims activity and said they opened 45 cases for the month and 537 cases for the year and noted that they assisted special services with the tobacco/vape shop compliance checks, and the DARE instruction in ongoing.

Interim Deputy Chief Blake reported on the Behavioral Health Unit and said 36 social work cases were opened in December, and 33 of those cases have been addressed by working with the family, connecting to services, hospitalization and partnering with other organizations, and 13 of the cases have been successfully closed. He said that an additional part-time social worker joined the behavioral health unit last week. Mayor Rilling asked if the social worker has assisted in reducing some of the case load of the patrol division or other responses that they would normally have. Interim Deputy Chief Blake said "yes" and currently the Behavioral Health Unit primarily follows up on the cases the patrol unit responds to and does their best to find services and make the cases not be an ongoing issue however, there has been some proactive response and they have assisted patrol at the scene of calls and are hoping to have them riding with the officers in the upcoming months.

Interim Deputy Chief Blake reported on the traffic unit and said 19 citations, 9 written warnings, and no verbal warnings were issued. He said they also made three arrests and an arrest was made in the fatal crash investigation that occurred on Martin Luther King Drive on November 27th.

Interim Deputy Chief Blake reported on Community Policing/Community Services and said they participated in numerous tree and menorah lightings throughout the city and ran their annual stuff a cruiser event that provided gifts for children throughout the city and were overwhelmed

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with the generosity this year. He said they also held the annual children's Christmas party at the South Norwalk School which was well attended.

Interim Deputy Chief Blake said there were 197 criminal arrests made for the month, there were a total of 4,847 calls for service, and the total for 2022 was 51,171. He said that he and Interim Chief Walsh have met with the patrol supervisors and discussed operations as well as increasing the proactive enforcement of traffic violations for quality-of-life issues. He said the day shift continues to be the busiest shift and is attributed to the busiest time in the city.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT- DECEMBER TRAINING REPORT

Deputy Chief Zecca reported and said for annual training that lethal weapons and firearms training was done and some of the officers were trained in emergency medical response for their certifications. She said for the review credit cycle that they are in there were classes conducted on crime scene investigations, cultural awareness and diversity, driver training, mental health first aid, police and the public, sexual harassment prevention, and bloodborne pathogens. She said for specialty training that an officer was sent to emergency services unit supervision class, taser instruction recertification. She said they also held a field officer training for all of the training officers as there is a large number of officers that just came out of the academy and have renewed their expectations with the supervisors to be sure the newest officers are getting the proper training they need.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked if there are many motor vehicle accidents that involves the officers. Deputy Chief said there are a few accidents. Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked if they are repeating officers or different officers. Deputy Chief Zecca said mostly different officers. Interim Chief Walsh that they keep a spreadsheet, and the front-line supervisors investigates each accident and then forwards him a memo of each accident.

EXECUTIVE SESSION- DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED PROMOTIONS

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Executive session began at 4:40PM.

Executive session ended at 4:55PM.

There were no motions made and no votes were taken.

PERSONNEL MATTERS

INTERIM CHIEF JAMES WALSH TO CHIEF OF POLICE

**** COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROMOTION OF INTERIM CHIEF JAMES WALSH TO CHIEF OF POLICE EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY.**

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**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

(The commissioners offered congratulations to Chief Walsh on his promotion)

Chief Walsh thanked the commission for all their support and the recognition that has been shown to him through this transition, and it is an honor to lead the men and women of the Norwalk Police Department and to service the great residents of the City of Norwalk.

INTERIM DEPUTY CHIEF TERRY BLAKE TO DEPUTY CHIEF

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER- CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROMOTION OF INTERIM DEPUTY CHIEF TERRY BLAKE TO DEPUTY CHIEF EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY.**

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

(The commissioners offered congratulations to Deputy Chief Blake on his promotion)

Deputy Chief Blake thanked the commission and said he is looking forward to serving the commission, the community, Chief Walsh, and the members of the Norwalk Police Department.

SERGEANT TOMASZ PODGORSKI TO LIEUTENANT

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROMOTION OF SERGEANT TOMASZ PODGORSKI TO LIEUTENANT EFFECTIVE THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2023.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

(The commissioners offered congratulations to Sergeant Tomasz Podgorski on his promotion to Lieutenant)

SERGEANT KEVIN MARKERT TO LIEUTENANT

**** COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROMOTION OF SERGEANT KEVIN MARKERT TO LIEUTENANT EFFECTIVE THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2023.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

(The commissioners offered congratulations to Sergeant Kevin Markert on his promotion to Lieutenant)

Sergeant Markert thanked the commission for the opportunity and said he will give his absolute best.

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OFFICER RAMON VALAZQUEZ TO SERGEANT

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROMOTION OF OFFICER RAMON VELAZQUEZ TO SERGEANT EFFECTIVE THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2023.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

(The commissioners offered congratulations to Officer Velazquez on his promotion to Sergeant)

OFFICER RAMON TEJADA TO SERGEANT

**** COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROMOTION OF OFFICER RAMON TEJADA TO SERGEANT EFFECTIVE THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2023.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

(The commissioners offered congratulations to Officer Tejada on his promotion to Sergeant)

LANGUAGE STIPEND- OFFICER OMAR RIVERA

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE LANGUAGE STIPEND OFFICER OMAR RIVERA.**

Mayor Rilling said that when officers are multilingual, they are entitled to a stipend per their contract that is added to their base salary because they are called upon to interpret and translate for other officers that may not have proficiency in another language.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

COMPLIMENTARY LETTERS

Chief Walsh said that the Danbury Police Department had suffered two sudden losses and he received a complimentary letter from Sergeant Malone of the Danbury Police Department thanking Sergeant Calise, officer Cowf, Officer Holmes, and Officer Silva for providing mutual aid to their department.

Chief Walsh said that the received a complimentary letter from a resident on Ferris Avenue thanking the dispatchers for continuing to respond to emergencies and wished them a Merry Christmas.

Chief Walsh said that the received a complimentary letter from State's Attorney Paul Ferencek thanking Sergeant Lapak for doing a presentation to a class that he teaches at the Housatonic

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Community College and many of the students want to be police officers, so they found the presentation to be very informative.

Chief Walsh said that he received a complimentary letter for Officer Petrafesa and said that on January 5, 2023, he responded to a call of a large racoon stumbling in the backyard and the resident was alarmed and Officer Petrafesa responded to the situation with the utmost professionalism, courtesy, and care and handled the situation with dignity and respect. He said they also thanked the entire police department as a whole for their service to the community. Chief Walsh said that he received a complimentary letter from the Stamford Veterans Association and thanked Officer Williams, Officer Wasilewski, Officer Peterson, and Officer Nieves for participating in the Stamford Veterans Park Partnership ceremonies, and also thanked the officers of the Norwalk Police Department for the continued support in honor of our veterans.

ADJOURNMENT

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 5:12PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Dilene Byrd