

**CITY OF NORWALK
PUBLIC SAFETY AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON
COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 25, 2023**

Attendance: Jenn McMurrer, Chair; Josh Goldstein; Bryan Meek (arrived at 7:04PM); Diana Revolus (arrived at 7:16PM)

Absent: Heidi Alterman; Edwin Camacho; Nicol Ayers

Staff: Michele DeLuca, Deputy Director Emergency Management; Chief James Walsh

I. WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

McMurrer called the meeting to order at 7:01PM.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- MARCH 23, 2023 (APRIL 27 MEETING- CANCELLED

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH (3) THREE IN FAVOR AND (1) ONE ABSTENTION- MR. MEEK**

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no public comments this evening.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

POLICE DEPARTMENT- NO ACTION ITEMS

FIRE DEPARTMENT- NO ACTION ITEMS

V. DISCUSSION

1. Update on Traffic Violations and Traffic Patrol-NPD

Chief Walsh provided an update on traffic violations and traffic patrol and said the staffing level will soon be at 100% and since the new year they have put 22 officers through field training, and are pre-planning into the spring of 2024 to prepare for those officers that will be retiring. He said they have been doing a lot of interviews and background investigations and are not lowering their

standards at all and have disqualified many candidates based on information from the background investigations and it is working out well.

Mr. Meek joined the meeting at 7:04PM.

Chief Walsh said that approximately two months ago the increased manpower allowed them to transfer two officers into the traffic unit, and they are all motorcycle certified and have been doing a lot of selective enforcement. He said the citations are up 145% compared to last year at this time and in April alone there was 1014 citations issued, and they did have a initiative through a grant program on distracted driving, so that in combination with the new traffic officers the morale has increased, and are seeing a whole new younger generation of officers just graduating the academy and field training and there have been a lot more self-initiated car stops coming from the patrol division, and 1910 citations have been issued since the new year and at this point last year there were 778 citations issued, and a lot of the locations that they are conducting enforcement on are in locations where they receive e-mails and text tips on. He said that the call volume has also increased within the patrol division and has seen a general increase in the overall activity in the patrol division, traffic unit, and community policing.

Ms. McMurrer said that is great to hear but it's sad that there are that many traffic violations and reminded everyone to slow down, don't do distracted driving, and to keep the cell phone away when driving.

Chief Walsh said they had partnered with the Connecticut State Police Truck Unit yesterday and issued 13 citations for commercial violations on trucks and as they have seen the development in the city there is a lot more commercial trucking. Mr. Goldstein asked how often the State Police will give access to this equipment and tools. Chief Walsh said that the State Police have to be present but have already said they will come back and that it just needs to be scheduled.

Chief Walsh said they also had two sound enforcement days and there has been two details where the traffic unit has gone out and enforced in certain areas and are enforcing some of the noise that is created by vehicles and that a lot is due to aftermarket mufflers and things like that which creates excessive noise so they have had two of those operations in the past month and plan to continue those through the summer.

2. School Safety and Information from Chief Walsh regarding his statement on the group that calls themselves the 504's

Ms. McMurrer said last month Chief Walsh issued a statement about a group of particular individuals that have been in and out of the schools and she thought now would be a good time for an update on school safety and to see if there are any updates on the group called the 504's that Chief Walsh can share as it is probably an ongoing investigation. Chief Walsh said a lot of the activity has slowed down but in January they begin to receive information of a loosely organized group of mostly middle-aged kids who organized a group called the 504's which is the calling code from the country of Honduras, and there were a lot of instances of vandalism as well as threatening behavior and fighting. He said they worked a lot with the community stakeholders who had provided information and at a minimum there were nine arrests made when the statement was released a month ago, but there have been no arrests since because they had partnered with Norwalk Public Schools and had two collaborative meetings with the head of

Public Safety for Norwalk Public Schools and things are going well. He said regarding overall school safety things are status quo and are still maintaining six School Resource Officers and still have five security hires which rotates schools.

Ms. Revolus joined the meeting at 7:16PM

Ms. McMurrer said that almost a year ago there was a statement issued that there would be more police presence on school grounds, and she has noticed that has continued and requested Chief Walsh address that. Chief Walsh said that last year officers were deployed and assigned to every school and since then have assigned two more School Resource Officers and established a plan of school security officers hired on overtime and there are five full-time hires, and one is assigned to each high school and the other three rotate geographically to the combination of schools in that area. Ms. McMurrer said that is great and that there is money being allocated to school security as part of the budget. Chief Walsh said they have partnered with Norwalk Public Schools and Mr. Ryan Harold has been forward leading with the Norwalk Public Schools and work with him daily and have made a lot of strides in our partnership.

Ms. Revolus said she is very happy to hear about the School Resource Officers and asked if there is space for them to have an office space at the schools that will bring back engagement between the children and the officers. Chief Walsh said that the School Resource Officers have a dedicated office in the high schools and is centrally located for access by the students and he believes the School Resource Officer at the middle schools do have a central point. Ms. Revolus said the sooner there is engagement with the officers the better. Chief Walsh said as things improve, they definitely want to get back to those goals but still have a very young police department and a lot of the officers are just finishing the training so before they start removing senior officers from the patrol division, they need to be sure the new officers are adequately trained and are mentored and supervised before they make further transfers.

Mr. Meek said with respect to the 504 gangs what kind of follow-up is done and asked if the children are accompanied by legal guardians. Chief Walsh said in any case when they are dealing with a juvenile, they make sure that they have adequate supervision and have proper care and all of their needs are taken care of the best they can.

Mr. Goldstein asked if there are various tactics or trainings that the police department can be doing with the school system to try and mitigate these kinds of issues from happening in the future. Chief Walsh said if it is happening in the school setting there is a collaborative effort between the Norwalk Public Schools and the Police Department and they are very effective, and there are all kinds of resources through the Department of Children and Families, and the Police Department has their own Behavioral Health Unit which is very effective and communication with their parents or guardians is also effective. Mr. Goldstein asked if there are available kinds of training modules that the police department can provide or are already providing to the Norwalk Public Schools to deal with this kind of thing and if so, is that administered on a routine basis. Chief Walsh said he can't recall any specific training that they do together, but all of the School Resource Officers are natural certified and there are a lot resources the Norwalk Public Schools that they collaborate with.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed this evening.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:35PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd