

Norwalk Board of Police Commissioners

Mayor Harry W. Rilling
Commissioner Fran Collier-Clemmons
Commissioner Tony Lopez
Commissioner Nathan Sumpter
Commissioner Ron Paladino

CITY OF NORWALK BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS Regular Meeting January 27, 2025

ATTENDANCE: Mayor Harry Rilling; Commissioner Collier-Clemmons; Commissioner Tony Lopez; Commissioner Ronald Paladino; Commissioner Nathan Sumpter

STAFF: Chief James Walsh; Deputy Chief Melissa Lepore; Deputy Chief Joseph Dinho

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 4:23 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES DECEMBER 16, 2024

**** COMMISSIONER SUMPTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.
** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION-
COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Levin-249 Chestnut Hill Road

Mr. Levin said he last appeared for public comment at the Police Commission meeting in June of last year and during the next six commission meetings the number of members of the public that showed up to submit a public comment is zero. In fact, he is the only member of the public to appear during the police commission meeting during all of 2024, and asked why, and suggested there may be a problem of accessibility, and the commissioners can take it upon themselves to improve that. He suspects the 4:15PM on a Monday afternoon is not a convenient or welcoming time for many if not most people. This important city commission should be accessible to the public. In mid-September he used the commissions website to request that the commission consider including an e-mail address so that residents can contact each commissioner directly, but he received no response to this request other than it would be shared with the commissioners, but this item has never been discussed by the commission at any of its meetings since September. He said he repeated the same request in October and was told that the mayor would consider it as he was responsible for such matters but again received no response. He said he repeated the request

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again in November and offered to have a discussion with the mayor to help him understand the logic and merits of his request and there still has been no response. He thinks this lack thereof response makes it clear as to why the public should be able to contact the commission without being filtered or blocked by anyone.

Mr. Levin said when he spoke last June, he had pointed out that the police union contract was due to expire, and the commission has a responsibility of reviewing this critical collective bargaining agreement but mysteriously the commission has had no discussion on the union contract which has now expired seven months ago and asked why. If the commission chooses not to abdicate this responsibility and review the union contract, then he urges them to read appendix A in full as the requirement therein of giving at least 24 hours' notice to any officer before being subject to random drug testing reads like a very bad joke.

Mayor Rilling said for the commission's edification when he first got elected, he had tried several times to have a meeting after 6:00PM. and still did not have any public participation above and beyond minor things.

NOVEMBER- OFFICER NICHOLAS DASCOLA & DAVID BUSCH

In 2024, the department was awarded capital funding to replace the duty firearms issued to sworn personnel. Our current duty firearm was in service for over 12 years and, based on Department of Justice recommendations, needed replacement. From the beginning, Officer Dascola and Officer Busch assessed several different firearm manufacturers and models and chose the new firearm in consultation with the administration. The transition began in late November 2024 and continued mainly in December 2024. A transition of this magnitude would typically take two to three months, based on the size of our department. In addition to the firearm transition, they introduced defensive tactics training designed to limit injuries to the arrestee and the officer. Officer Dascola and Officer Busch also completed less lethal training, which included handcuffing and taser tactics, which increased the officers' training and the capability to de-escalate. Besides issuing the new equipment to over 180 employees, they provided professional training and trained the men and women to make them one of the best-trained police workforces in Connecticut.

Due to their efforts, the department is better trained and equipped. Often, officers in Administrative Divisions, such as the Training Division, are not recognized for their efforts. Their efforts make the rest of the department a more professional, capable workforce that can better serve the citizens of Norwalk.

(The commissioners congratulated Officers Nicholas Dascola and David Busch)

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CHIEF'S EXECUTIVE REPORT- DECEMBER EXECUTIVE REPORT

Sworn Personnel Updates

Chief Walsh reported on the patrol staffing for November and said that there are 181 Sworn Personnel (2 open sworn positions), one officer on Administration leave pending an Internal Affairs Investigation, and one officer on a leave of absence.

Chief Walsh said that four officers are on extended workmen's compensation leave, a total of 195.29 sick days were used, and 124.5 workmen's compensation days were used.

Chief Walsh said Officers Mozo, Giron, and Benn are on field training.

Civilian Personnel Updates

Chief Walsh provided an update and said there are 20 telecommunicators/ Supervisors assigned to Combined Dispatch and there is one open position that they are currently recruiting for through the HR Department, and 14 civilian employees are assigned to support staff positions and are fully staffed.

Departmental Initiatives

Chief Walsh said there is one remaining candidate for the January POST academy and was Sworn in on January 9, 2025.

Chief Walsh said the 2024 year-end crime statistics tracked lower in all major indexes compared to 2023.

Chief Walsh said self-initiated car stops increased by 58 %, and in 2023 there were 8,152 citations issued and in 2024, there were 12,955 citations issued.

Chief Walsh said there were record high calls for service and in 2024 and had received over 86,000, and in 2023 there were 76,000.

Finance and Current Fiscal Year Budgeting

Chief Walsh said that all budgets are monitored by Mr. Docimo of Administrative Services, and he provided an overview of the December 2024 budget status and noted that all operating salaries and overtime budgets are tracking in the green halfway through the fiscal year and are currently tracking at 39% for overtime and 50% for salaries.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons thanked Chief Walsh for the report and said it is very helpful to her and the increases in citations that were issued reflects the confidence that they residents have to call the police, and they will respond, as well as the decrease in robberies and burglaries etc. is a testament to the training that the officers are receiving and able to put into action.

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OPERATIONS REPORT

PATROL STAFFING (DECEMBER)

Chief Walsh reported on the Detective Bureau activity and said that 30 cases were opened in December and noted that a suspect was charged with threatening in the first degree, interfering, and disorderly conduct following a lengthy standoff with patrol and ESC. This was an incident that occurred on Adams Avenue that began as domestic violence and turned into a subject barricading and threatening to do bodily harm and had recovered two firearms. There was also a domestic violence home invasion, and the assault suspect was located by US Marshals in upstate New York for a warrant stemming from home invasion assault incident and obtained a warrant and worked with the US Marshals where the suspect was apprehended in upstate New York and was returned to Connecticut.

Deputy Walsh reported on the Special Services activity and said they opened 42 cases for December and noted that a suspect was arrested by warrant and charged with four counts for sale of narcotics. Search warrants were executed at two smoke shops and the suspects were arrested and marijuana was seized. A search warrant was served at a business at 70 Cedar Street and three gambling machines, cigarettes and cash were seized. Liquor compliance checks were performed with Connecticut Consumer Protection and found violations at four out of the seven businesses.

Chief Walsh reported on the Special Victims activity and said they opened 35 cases for December and noted that a juvenile was arrested following a fight, a juvenile that was missing had been located, and there were several ongoing investigations.

Chief Walsh reported on the Marine Unit activity and said they had four cases for December and noted that there was a boat fire at the South Norwalk Boat Club. The total calls for 2024 for the Marine Division were 384, which represents a 25% increase from 2023. He said that also had partaken in investigations and rescued 35 people from the water.

Chief Walsh said there were 6,024 calls for service and 160 total arrests in December, and that 776 total citations, summons, and written warnings were issued for the month finishing the year with 12,955 and there were 22 DUI arrests which is an all-time high.

Chief Walsh said he did an analysis of the crash data from motor vehicle accidents from 2023 to 2024 and did see a 18% decrease.

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

TRAINING REPORT (DECEMBER)

Deputy Chief Dinho reported on the Community Police Services Division and said they handled a total of 788 calls for service in December. He said that 26 events were attended, and he provided an overview of the major events attended/assisted during December.

Deputy Chief Dinho reported on the Traffic Unit and said they had conducted 393 motor vehicle stops and two enforcement citations for school bus violations, and 26 parking violations were

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issued in December. He said there were 34 selective enforcement locations and some of the locations were held on West Avenue, East Avenue, Fort Point Street, Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd., Newtown Avenue, Richards Avenue, Rowayton Avenue, Connecticut Avenue, Old Saugatuck Road, and Riverside Avenue.

Deputy Chief Dinho provided an overview of the Behavioral Health Unit and said they opened 31 cases in December, addressed 31 cases, closed out 30 cases, hospitalized 13 cases, referred 14 cases for services, and worked with the families on 15 cases.

Deputy Chief Dinho provided an overview of the training for December and said 11 total subject areas were attended by 57 officers.

Commissioner Paladino said the community events are a great way for the community to meet the police and thanked them for doing such a great job.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT (DECEMBER)

Deputy Chief Lepore reported on the grants and inspections and said that the DUI grant had 30 grant hires for December for a total of 240 hours worked. The officers made 149 car stops, issued 138 infraction tickets, which led to 18 DUI arrests. She said they were awarded the JAG grant in the amount of \$18,047 which will be utilized to purchase equipment such as speed signs, laser guns, and increased patrol, and they are continually monitoring opportunities and applying for funding.

Deputy Chief Lepore reported on the staff inspections and said the property room inspection has been completed and there were no major discrepancies although they are getting ready to address the storage space and the disposal of unclaimed property. She said the annual evidence accounts were also audited with the detective bureau and the special services division and there were no discrepancies found.

Deputy Chief Lepore reported on the Crime Scene Unit and said that 101 persons were fingerprinted (41 were for pistol permits and that a total of 1,329 persons have been fingerprinted for the year and there were 484 pistol permits processed for the year. She said 22 DVDs / or photos were created for case requests, 13 cases were processed for evidence, and 66 patrol cases required camera/photograph downloads of scenes, and a background check was conducted on one massage therapist of Massage Envy and there was a total of 40 background checks for the year. She said there were no solicitor permits requested for the month but there were 57 total permits for the year, and there were no pawnbroker/precious metal permit requests. She said the CSI unit vehicle was not deployed during December.

Deputy Chief Lepore said the promotional exam is on schedule for February 1, 2025, and to date there are 16 people who signed up for the sergeant's exam and 12 people signed up for the lieutenant's exam.

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Deputy Chief Lepore said they assisted the Corporation Counsel's with three civil cases.

Deputy Chief Lepore said performance evaluations were announced and are completed in the month of January.

Deputy Chief Lepore reported on the body and dashboard cameras and said there were no issues reported in December, and there were two taser issues reported for laser malfunctions and both were replaced by Axon.

Deputy Chief Lepore said that there were 61 new requests for case videos, 36 disks were burned with videos, and 25 electronic shares with Stamford Court.

Deputy Chief Lepore reported on the accreditation and said they are continually collecting proofs and reviewing CALEA standards for compliance and annual audits. She said the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) continues to be put together and reviewed during development stages. She said they are organizing files for the third-year remote review that will be held March 7th to March 15th and include 100 files and four interviews in critical areas and performance.

Deputy Chief Lepore said this year will also include the fourth-year review in September and a physical on-site audit in October.

Commissioner Lopez asked how the department is prioritizing the initiatives for the JAG grant.

Deputy Chief Lepore said when they apply for the grant, they had to indicate what they want to utilize the grant for, and it will help to replace equipment and keep up with the technology.

PERSONNEL MATTERS

TUITION REIMBURSEMENT- LIEUTENANT SOFIA GULINO

**** COMMISSIONER PALADINO MOVED TO APPROVE THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR LIEUTENANT SOFIA GULINO IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,317.50**

**** COMMISSIONER PALADINO MOVED TO AMEND THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR LIEUTENANT SOFIA GULINO IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,337.50**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COMMISSIONER PALADINO MOVED TO APPROVE THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR LIEUTENANT SOFIA GULINO IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,337.50**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

TUITION REIMBURSEMENT- SERGEANT NATHANIEL PAULINO

**** COMMISSIONER SUMPTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR SERGEANT NATHANIEL PAULINO IN THE AMOUNT OF \$2,480.00**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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TUITION REIMBURSEMENT- OFFICER MARK VOZZELLA

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR OFFICER MARK VOZZELLA IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,120.50**

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO AMEND THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR OFFICER MARK VOZZELLA IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,120.75**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR OFFICER MARK VOZZELLA IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,120.75**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

BACHELOR'S DEGREE STIPEND- OFFICER KIYANIAH SIMPKINS

**** COMMISSIONER SUMPTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE TUITION BACHELOR'S DEGREE STIPEND FOR OFFICER KIYANIAH SIMPKINS**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

COMPLIMENTARY LETTERS

Chief Walsh said he received a complimentary letter from Commissioner Paladino for the community policing officers which stated he had the pleasure to be with the officers during the annual stuff a cruiser event, and it was inspirational to hear them talk about how they hope to get enough toys to donate to the children in need of the upcoming holiday party as well as those for those who are unable to attend. They also noticed that a cadet was not properly dressed for the weather, so they took it upon themselves to buy him a hat, jacket, and gloves in which he contributed as well. He went on to say he was so impressed with the officers and is blessed to have been part of these events. Chief Walsh, Mayor Rilling, Deputy Chief Blake, Deputy Chief Dinho, and Deputy Chief Lepore also stopped by with refreshments while spending time at each of the events. On behalf of the NPD Police Commissioners, we thank you and wish them happy holidays.

Chief Walsh said it was one of the most successful stuff a cruiser season that they have had since he was involved in the event and the Children's Christmas Party was an overwhelming success.

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Commissioner Sumpter asked what the cadet program is. Chief Walsh provided an overview of the program and said it is a program for kids that are interested in public safety as a possible career. Commissioner Sumpter asked if any of the cadets every became a police officer. Chief Walsh said "yes".

Chief Walsh said he received a complimentary email from Mr. Katz, the EMS director at Norwalk Hospital for Officer Obinna, Officer Giron, and Officer Hernandez for helping to save a gentleman who went into cardiac arrest while swimming.

Chief Walsh said he received a complimentary letter from Mr. Eichen commending Officers Vasquez and Colletto for their exceptional consideration and cooperation regarding a disagreement at Best Buy.

Commissioner Paladino said he attended the Police Commissioners Association meeting at the Orange Police Department, and they had asked to put names forward for an award and would be happy to do that if there are any that Chief Walsh would like to put forward. Chief Walsh said he traditionally gets an email from that committee which he has not yet received and participates in that annually and recognizes the great work of the officers.

ADJOURNMENT

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd