

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 March 17, 2025

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

STAFF: Chief James Walsh; Deputy Chief Terry Blake; Deputy Chief Melissa Lepore; Deputy Chief Joseph Dinho; Sergeant Ramon Tejada; Officer David Busch

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 4:49 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FEBRUARY 24, 2025

****COMMISSIONER PALADINO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Levin

Mr. Levin said he had previously submitted his concerns to this commission. Sadly, he has received no response from this commission or any of them. Moreover, it appears his concerns have been ignored. This is deeply disappointing because he believes he has respectfully pointed out some serious deficiencies in how this commission meets its responsibilities and does its job.

As he reminded the commission last year, the police officers' union contract expired nine months ago. A new contract is being negotiated now, though the public remains unaware of who is conducting these negotiations. This lack of transparency is troubling, and residents deserve to know who is making decisions on our behalf.

It is the commission's duty to review the expired contract, understand its terms, ask questions, and advocate for necessary improvements. One particularly concerning provision in the existing contract

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should not be carried over into any future agreement, which is the requirement that any officer selected for random drug testing must be notified no less than 24 hours in advance. A policy that grants advance notice for random drug testing undermines its very purpose. Perhaps it should be called the "Cheech & Chong Provision." This is a clear problem, and the commission needs to address it now before it creates larger issues for our city.

Mayor Rilling asked Mr. Levin if he had any comments regarding an item on the agenda because this comment does not relate to an item on the agenda and, therefore, would be in violation of the Freedom of Information Act.

FEBRUARY- OFFICER(S) OF THE MONTH: OFFICER -OFFICER JONATHAN BRANCIFORTE

Chief Walsh read the following letter into the record:

I am honored to inform you that you have been selected as Officer of the Month for February 2025. You were chosen due to your continued professional and dedicated service in two investigations. Both cases were self-initiated. One led to the recovery of a stolen car with its VIN # changed, and the second involved arresting a convicted felon with an illegal handgun. On February 5, 2025, at approximately 18:41, you demonstrated exceptional situational awareness and judgment that led to the recovery of an illegal firearm from a parolee with an extensive felony history. While conducting traffic enforcement on Pine. Street, you observed a vehicle committing multiple violations and initiated a car stop. Upon approaching the car with three individuals, you immediately recognized behavioral cues, such as the passenger indicating he would flee from the vehicle and hiding an item in his waistband. As the subject attempted to flee, you were able to subdue him and bring him to the ground, where you recovered a loaded Polymer Ghost gun from the waistband of the individual. The individual was also found in possession of marijuana and had a history of robbery and weapons-related offenses, including illegal firearm possession and resisting arrest.

On February 17, 2025, you conducted a car stop on a newer Acura bearing an out-of-state transporter plate. During the investigation, reasonable suspicion was developed that the vehicle may have been stolen, and a new Vin# was given. Some factors that led to reasonable suspicion were a generic key fob assigned to the car, the VIN not having any history before 2024 when the vehicle was 2022, the car bearing a transporter plate, and the owner admitting to buying the vehicle on Facebook Marketplace. Officers received consent to search the car for a secondary VIN#. Upon searching the vehicle, a secondary VIN# was located on the floorboard, which revealed the car was given a VIN# and was stolen out of NY.

Both incidents exemplify Officer Branciforte's dedication to public safety, sharp investigative instincts, and ability to manage high-risk encounters with professionalism and control. His actions reflect the highest law enforcement standards and deserve recognition for outstanding police work.

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(The commissioners congratulated Officer Jonathan Branciforte)

CHIEF'S EXECUTIVE REPORT- FEBRUARY EXECUTIVE REPORT

Sworn Personnel Updates

Chief Walsh reported on the patrol staffing for February and said there are 182 sworn personnel (1 open sworn position), one officer on Administration leave pending an Internal Affairs Investigation, and three officers are on extended workmen's compensation leave. Chief Walsh said 171.8 sick days and 71 workmen's compensation days were used. Chief Walsh said one officer remains in on-field training, and Officer Kevin Shoenthal was promoted to sergeant.

Civilian Personnel Updates

Chief Walsh provided an update on the civilian personnel and said 19 telecommunicators/ Supervisors are assigned to Combined Dispatch and two open positions. Human Relations has posted the job, testing is underway, and interviews will be held next week. There are 14 civilian employees assigned to support staff positions, and they are fully staffed. A new social worker was onboarded from the recovery network for the Behavioral Health Unit, which is now fully staffed.

Departmental Initiatives

Chief Walsh reported on the departmental initiatives and said final preparations are underway for the CALEA review, which began on March 11, 2025. The CALEA assessment ended on Friday and passed all areas and will be moving forward to the onsite assessment in November.

Chief Walsh said the recruitment and police app. Tests opened for future new applicants.

Chief Walsh said the prepared 911 program is fully implemented. The program translates into 38 languages for the 911 call taker into text form.

Chief Walsh reported on the first-quarter crime statistics for 2024. In Norwalk, crimes against persons were down 15%, crimes against property were down 17.5%, and crimes against society were down 25%. Going forward, the state will release the data quarterly.

Finance and Current Fiscal Year Budgeting

Chief Walsh said that Mr. Docimo of Administrative Services monitors all budgets. The 2025/26 fiscal and operating budgets have been prepared and submitted to finance and the board of estimate and taxation for review and approval and have had a 2.5% budget increase since last year. Chief Walsh provided an overview of the February 2025 budget status and noted that all operating salaries and overtime budgets are tracking in the green eight months into the fiscal year.

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Mayor Rilling said he receives many favorable comments from the public regarding school security and requested Chief Walsh give an overview of the overtime costs. Chief Walsh noted that currently, they deploy 40 hours each day for school security, and the NPD covers approximately 36 hours of the cost, and the NPS covers four hours of that. This does not include school resource officers, so there can be 12-16 officers for school security on any given day.

OPERATIONS REPORT

PATROL STAFFING (FEBRUARY)

Deputy Chief Blake reported on the Detective Bureau activity and said that 19 cases were opened in February and noted that Kyle Vigneault was arrested via a warrant and charged with manslaughter in the first degree, cruelty to persons, and risk of injury. A suspect was extradited from New York on an arrest warrant and was charged with larceny in the third degree, forgery in the third degree, and identification theft in the third degree. A suspect was arrested by warrant, charging unlawful discharge of a firearm, reckless endangerment in the first degree, violation of a protective order, criminal possession of a firearm, and criminal mischief in the second degree.

Deputy Chief Blake reported on the Special Services activity and said they opened 34 cases in February and noted a search warrant was executed at a home on Lexington Avenue. Cocaine and heroin were seized, and a suspect was arrested. An online prostitution investigation was conducted, and two arrests were made. Search warrants were executed in Norwalk and Bridgeport, and two suspects were arrested. This resulted from an investigation by their FBI task force officer working with the Bridgeport authorities.

Deputy Chief Blake reported on the Special Victims activity and said they opened 31 cases in February and noted that a suspect was arrested by warrant and charged with assault in the third degree, risk of injury to a minor, and disorderly conduct. The arrest stemmed from an incident with a Nathan Hale Middle School student in December 2024. The suspect was a para-professional at the school. Officers Prada and Aldarondo attended the domestic violence crisis center movie night at SONO collection to raise awareness of teen dating violence.

Deputy Chief Blake said 961 citations were issued in February, for a total of 2,278 for the year.

Deputy Chief Blake reported on the Marine Unit's activity in February and noted that they are engaged with the Walk Bridge project daily, assisted with department review credit training, and attended the Harbor Commission meeting.

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Deputy Chief Blake said there were 5,433 calls for service and 142 total arrests in February.

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

TRAINING REPORT (FEBRUARY)

Deputy Chief Dinho reported on the Community Police Services Division and said they handled 816 calls for service in February. He said 10 events were attended and provided an overview of the major events they had attended/assisted during February.

Deputy Chief Dinho reported on the Traffic Unit and said they had conducted 354 motor vehicle stops, six child car seat installations, and 76 parking violations were issued in February. He said there were 34 selective enforcement locations and noted some of the locations.

Deputy Chief Dinho provided an overview of the Behavioral Health Unit and said they opened 37 cases in February, addressed 37 cases, closed out 31 cases, hospitalized 15 cases, partnered with the state's attorney in two, referred 21 cases for services, and worked with the families on nine cases.

Deputy Chief Dinho provided an overview of the February training, saying there were five total subject areas, and 43 officers attended.

Deputy Chief Dinho provided an overview of the state-mandated training and said that every officer is required to complete a minimum number of training hours over a period of three years and have an ongoing rotating schedule to keep all the officer's certifications in place. The training division and the police academy in Meriden monitors the training. Mayor Riling asked what the required hours of training are. Deputy Chief Dinho said 60 hours of training over three years.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT (FEBRUARY)

Deputy Chief Lepore reported on the grants and inspections and said the DUI grant had 22 grant hires for February for 192 hours worked. The officers made 155 car stops, issued 127 infraction tickets, and made 11 DUI arrests. She said no other grant funding was utilized in February, but two grant applications are open and being prepared for; the distracted driver grant was awarded for \$69,000; these funds are only to be utilized for enforcement during the month of April, and they are continually monitoring opportunities and applying for funding.

Deputy Chief Lepore reported on the staff inspections and said no inspections were scheduled or conducted during February.

Deputy Chief Lepore reported on the Crime Scene Unit that 107 people were fingerprinted (33 were for pistol permits). She said 16 DVDs / photos were created for case requests, 30 cases were processed for evidence, 71 patrol cases required camera/photograph downloads of scenes, and background checks were conducted with three massage therapists for Green Living Spa,

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Massage Envy, and Angel Reflexology. She said four solicitor permits were issued in February, and there were no pawnbroker/precious metal permit requests. She said the CSI unit vehicle was not deployed during February.

Deputy Chief Lepore said the promotional exam reviews and results were completed. The officers coming out first had written and assessment center scores into the mid-90s. The officer with the top score was recently promoted to sergeant to fill the vacancy from a previous retirement.

Deputy Chief Lepore said they assisted the Corporation Counsel with three civil cases. The IA Lieutenant has begun working on the NPD annual report for March completion. One intern applicant from Sacred Heart University is working with the Special Victims Unit.

Deputy Chief Lepore reported on the body and dashboard cameras and said that one officer was issued a replacement camera. Two taser issues were reported, and Axon replaced them.

Deputy Chief Lepore said there were 60 new requests for case videos, 32 disks were burned with videos, and 28 electronic shares with Stamford Court. Performance audits on officer equipment usage and video tagging are conducted monthly. Communication takes place regularly for any issues or concerns.

Deputy Chief Lepore reported on the accreditation and said they are continually collecting proofs and reviewing CALEA standards for compliance and annual audits. Currently, they are in the third-year remote review cycle, which takes place from March 7th to March 15th. This year will include the fourth-year review at the end of September and the physical on-site audit in October. Mayor Rilling noted that they are proceeding cautiously with federal grants because they don't know which ones will be awarded. They have already received notice that a few non-police-related grants have been pulled and have been relying on some of them. Unfortunately, they are being pulled without reason.

PERSONNEL MATTERS

PROMOTION RANK OF LIEUTENANT- SERGEANT RAMON TEJADA

****COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROMOTION OF SERGEANT RAMON TEJADA TO THE RANK OF LIEUTENANT EFFECTIVE MARCH 20, 2025.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PROMOTION RANK OF SERGEANT- OFFICER DAVID BUSCH

****COMMISSIONER SUMPTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROMOTION OF OFFICER DAVID BUSCH TO THE RANK OF SERGEANT, EFFECTIVE MARCH 20, 2025.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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(The commissioners congratulated Sergeant Tejada and Officer Busch)

COMPLIMENTARY LETTERS

Chief Walsh said they received a complimentary letter for Mr. Steele regarding Officer Anuszkiewicz and his partner for helping with their grandson, who was acting out, and they were both professional and empathetic. Unfortunately, they had to return later in the afternoon and again demonstrated the same characteristics.

Chief Walsh said they received a complimentary letter from the Teen Advisory Board for supporting the teen movie night.

Chief Walsh said they received a complimentary letter of support from Chief DiFederico of the town of New Canaan for assisting them in the search for a potentially dangerous individual who escaped from Silver Hills Hospital.

Chief Walsh said they received a letter of thanks from Michelle Tiani thanking Animal Control Officer Felner. She stated that they had an incident this past year with their pet having an incident with an Amazon delivery driver. She said her daughter had been working on a magnet to put on mailboxes notifying delivery drivers that a dog lives at the residence for a school project, and Animal Control Officer Felner came to the gym to see her final project.

Chief Walsh said they received a complimentary letter from Deputy Chief Cipolla of the Wilton Police Department for help locating the missing woman who was unfortunately found in the Norwalk River.

Mayor Rilling clarified Mr. Levin's comments regarding the union contract negotiations and said the city is negotiating with five unions properly through the attorneys. The commission will be brought up to speed, but if the commission would like to know more, they should feel free to call him. Still, there are limits to what he can discuss during contract negotiations.

ADJOURNMENT

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Dilene Byrd

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