

WOODBRIIDGE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS WOODBRIIDGE TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

REGULAR MEETING – TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

MINUTES

February 7, 2023

The regular meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners/Traffic Authority took place in the Training Room at the Police Department on Tuesday, February 7, 2023, at 6:15 p.m.

- Chairman Berke called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Commissioners Present-

Chairman Robert Berke
Commissioner Andrew Esposito, Jr.
Commissioner Deborah Desir
Commissioner Mica Cardozo
Commissioner Henry Kopel

Police Administration Present-

Chief Frank P. Cappiello
Deputy Chief Ronald E. Smith, Jr.
Administrative Assistant Janice Innocenzi

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- There were no Public Comments.

TRAFFIC MATTERS:

- TPZ Traffic Concerns – Merritt Ave/Miles Ave/Manila Ave: We received a request from the Town Planning & Zoning Commission pertaining to traffic in the Manila Ave., Miles Ave., Merritt Ave. area of town and proposed further development in that neighborhood. At their December 5th meeting, TPZ approved a subdivision application for 9 Manila Ave. for the creation of two additional lots, for a total of three lots, where there had previously only been one. The TPZ Commission currently has an application pending before them for the creation of a new road off Merritt Avenue, which if approved, will have a total of 14 duplexes on it. That parcel of land is located on the south side of Merritt Ave. and is bordered by Rte. 15 and the vacant wooded area behind the Phillips 66 gas station/convenience store on Rte. 69 at the New Haven line. Residents in that neighborhood have voiced their concerns to the TPZ regarding speeding, parking, and the possible hindrance of the ability of the residents, snowplows, emergency vehicles, and school buses to drive down those streets, as well as their frustration about often being “blocked” by Rte. 69 traffic congestion and backup when entering or exiting Merritt Avenue. TPZ has asked that we study the area and determine if any traffic calming devices or possible parking restrictions would be beneficial in addressing the concerns expressed. I directed that a traffic study for that area be initiated, and it was just recently completed. We will be reviewing the findings of the report at next month’s meeting. We should have some recommendations to share and discuss with you first, then we can discuss the formal response from the Traffic Authority to the TPZ and the neighborhood.
- Towing Service Issues: We recently had two issues that have come up with our Towing Service providers. For the benefit of all, especially our two newest Commissioners, Chief Cappiello reviewed our towing service procedures. We have a total of six towing services, who we utilize as needed, on a rotational basis, and who we have had a longstanding professional relationship with now and some, in fact, for decades. These towing services are provided by Amity Motors, York Auto Clinic, Megill’s, Bruneau’s Garage, DeGennaro’s Auto and Orange Auto.

The first issue is, for years Bruneau’s Garage was our only tow service with the capability and equipment to provide services for both regular duty and heavy duty calls for service for larger trucks over a certain weight and tractor trailers. Amity Motors has always been available for regular duty tow calls, up until the beginning of this year, when they advised us that they had acquired a new truck and that they too were now available

and equipped for heavy duty calls for service. Since they advised us of that, we told them okay, if you have the equipment, you are welcome to do that as well. We put them on the tow list for the added services they could provide. But recently, it was determined that the heavy duty tow truck Amity Motors listed on their signed Memorandum of Agreement, which they submitted for the 2023 calendar year, was not actually registered or owned by Amity Motors, but is owned by a company in Orange, and that Amity Motors does not own a vehicle capable of performing heavy duty towing. I brought that to the attention of the owner and effective January 23, I removed Amity Motors from the Police Department towing rotation list for heavy duty calls only. If they do, at some point in the future, purchase and register their own heavy duty tow truck, then they can certainly reapply to be reinstated for heavy duty calls.

The second matter is outlined in correspondence from Robert Bruneau of Bruneau's Garage, regarding the towing rotation cycle itself. The history of the rotation cycle of that list is that sometime circa 2005, the Board of Police Commissioners in place at that time, granted approval to give preferential treatment to our tax base for tow companies located in Woodbridge. Back then, the only two tow companies located in town were Amity Motors and Ciancola Motors. Ciancola Motors eventually went out of business, leaving Amity Motors as the sole company located in town. The tow rotation cycle, which was established decades ago and still remains in effect today, gives one extra towing call per rotation cycle to Amity Motors for being located in Woodbridge. The cycle is: Amity, Bruneau's, York, DeGennaro, Amity gets another one, then Megill's, and Orange Auto, then it goes back to the top of the list. Our policy, which the owners of the tow companies are all well aware of, is that the tow company called for service must respond with their company's vehicle and that vehicle must be properly and permanently marked as such. If they are unable to accept a call when requested, they cannot transfer their call to another tow company, and they must forfeit their turn in that rotation cycle. For several years now, both Amity Motors and York Auto have been sharing drivers for their towing calls, and these drivers and trucks are based out of Mike's Auto in Orange, a procedure that has been in place for years. On the Police Department side, we aren't concerned about who is driving the truck, but only that the company that is called is the company truck that arrives on scene, and that they do so in a reasonable amount of time and their driver performs the towing service efficiently.

Amity Motors currently has three tow trucks, which I have confirmed are registered to their business at 220 Amity Road, and for which they pay taxes to the Town of Woodbridge. York Auto currently has two tow trucks registered to their business, which is located in West Haven. I discussed it with Scott Altschuler, the proprietor/owner of Amity Motors, he is aware of the issue being brought before the Board by Mr. Bruneau that he believes because the trucks are based out of Orange that Amity Motors is not a towing business from Woodbridge and for that reason, he does not think Amity Motors should have an extra tow. In speaking to Scott Altschuler and making him aware of what is going on, he feels that the tow rotation cycle should at least remain as is because his is the only tow service paying taxes to the Town of Woodbridge. He claims that vehicles sometimes being towed to Mike's Auto for mechanical failures are coming back to his garage and some repair work is still being done in Woodbridge. So the issue before the Board tonight is whether you would like to modify the rotation cycle as it pertains to Amity Motors, as is being requested by Mr. Bruneau.

Chairman Berke asked Chief Cappiello for his thoughts. Chief Cappiello said as far as the rotation cycle goes, I would honor, and we have been honoring, what the previous Board said, and I will certainly honor whatever the Board decides tonight. I don't think in my capacity it would be right to give an opinion about giving preferential treatment to anyone. My main concern, our main concern, is to make sure whatever the policy is that everybody abides by it, and we hold everybody to task and go by whatever the policy set forth is, and my main concern is that we get efficient, responsible service when we need it, but as far as giving anybody an extra rotation, I honor what the previous Board said.

The Board voted unanimously (Desir/Kopel) to continue the towing practice of giving two tow rotations to Amity Motors.

- **Rte. 69/Clark Road (Update):** Unfortunately, we had a fatal accident on December 31st at the intersection of Rte. 69 and Clark Road. We have discussed this dangerous stretch of road and its curved intersection in the past as this location has been the site of numerous serious and fatal accidents for many years. Following our April 2022 meeting, I filed a written request with the CT Dept. of Transportation for a traffic study of the area and the solicited any traffic safety engineering enhancements to improve highway safety and reduce crashes in that vicinity. We've stepped up our visibility, our deterrent traffic and radar assignments, and the deployment of our Speed Awareness Trailer in the area, but accidents continue to occur there. My most recent correspondence from the CT Dept. of Transportation was on January 25, 2023 in which they advised me that their Division of Traffic Engineering is investigating our request, but their engineering team initially assigned to the request has changed. They apologized for the inconvenience and stated that they will let me know the results of their investigation when it is complete. I will advise you when I receive that information, and in the meantime, we will continue our traffic enforcement efforts in that area.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Board voted unanimously (Esposito/Desir) to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Traffic Authority and move directly into the regular meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners at 6:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Janice Innocenzi, Administrative Assistant

WOODBRIIDGE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS WOODBRIIDGE TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

REGULAR MEETING – POLICE COMMISSION

MINUTES

February 7, 2023

The regular meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners/Woodbridge Traffic Authority took place in the Training Room at the Police Department on Tuesday, February 7, 2023, at 6:15 p.m.

- Chairman Berke called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Commissioners Present-

Chairman Robert Berke
Commissioner Andrew Esposito, Jr.
Commissioner Deborah Desir
Commissioner Mica Cardozo
Commissioner Henry Kopel

Police Administration Present-

Chief Frank P. Cappiello
Deputy Chief Ronald E. Smith, Jr.
Administrative Assistant Janice Innocenzi

APPROVAL of MINUTES:

- B.O.P.C. Regular Meeting – July 18, 2022

The Board voted unanimously (Esposito/Kopel) to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners/Woodbridge Traffic Authority held July 18, 2022.

- B.O.P.C. Special Meeting - October 3, 2022

On a motion made by Commissioner Cardozo and seconded by Commissioner Kopel, the Board voted to approve the minutes of a Special Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners held October 3, 2022.

Votes in Favor: Esposito, Cardozo, Kopel

Abstained: Berke, Desir

Motion passes.

- B.O.P.C. Special Meeting – November 1, 2022

The Board voted unanimously (Kopel/Cardozo) to approve the minutes of a special meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners held November 1, 2022.

- B.O.P.C. Special Meeting – November 21, 2022

The Board voted unanimously (Esposito/Kopel) to approve the minutes of a special meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners held November 21, 2022.

- B.O.P.C. Regular Meeting – December 12, 2022

On a motion made by Commissioner Kopel and seconded by Commissioner Desir, the Board voted to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners/Woodbridge Traffic Authority held December 12, 2022.

Votes in Favor: Berke, Desir, Cardozo, Kopel

Abstained: Esposito

Motion passes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- There were no Public Comments.

REVIEW of REPORTS:

- **Financial Report:** Chief Cappiello reported that we have completed the first seven months of the fiscal year and we remain on track at approximately 57.9%. Police Overtime and Dispatch Overtime lines have been significantly affected since the start of the fiscal year with several-month vacancies of both an Officer and a Dispatcher, along with several extended absences, one of which was a Workers' Comp related issue. That line continued to be further impacted during December and January due to personnel out for Covid related absences, an additional Officer out on an unexpected extended medical leave, and a vacancy due to an Officer retirement, which became effective at the beginning of last month. In the last two months, we had a windstorm with multiple poles and trees down, public hazards; 2 fatal motor vehicle accidents with road closures and utility work; the last few weeks, we had 8-9 burglary investigations, all occurred after hours; and a weekend social media threat. Police overtime line is at 91.9% and Dispatch overtime is at 135.7%. Data Processing line 52210 is at 94.5% which reflects increases and costs associated with our ongoing IT network upgrade and cybersecurity upgrades. Repair Maintenance – Vehicles line is up due to high mileage, a lot of repairs, and the high cost of auto parts.

The Board voted unanimously (Kopel/Esposito) to accept the Financial Report.

- **Activity Report:** Chief Cappiello reported the following -
Criminal Activity Report (December-January)-
 - Burglaries: 10 (9 commercial / 1 residential)
 - Drug Complaint: 1
 - Fraud Cases: 15 (check frauds, identity thefts, altered checks)
 - Gunshots Heard: 4
 - Missing Persons: 2
 - Stolen Motor Vehicles: 2
 - Outstanding Arrest Warrants Served: 5
 - ISU:
 - Public Fingerprinting Requests: 19
 - Pistol Permit Applications Processed & Background Checks Completed: 12
 - New Cases Assumed: 17
 - Background investigations are currently being conducted on 5 entry level Police Officer applicants.
 - On Dec. 14, ISU attended the guilty plea hearing for the subject arrested for our armed carjacking that occurred at a Warren Road residence, along with numerous other robberies throughout the area. Formal sentencing for those crimes will be in March.
 - A December sexual assault investigation was concluded with an arrest warrant submitted to court for prosecutorial review.
 - ISU is working on an arson investigation with the Fire Marshal involving a stolen motor vehicle found set on fire at the Country Club of Woodbridge property on Woodfield Road last month.
 - The last two weeks ISU has been busy with the rash of commercial burglaries; warrants will be forthcoming.

Motor Vehicle Activity Report-

- Patrol Division: Deputy Chief Ronald Smith reported the following -
 - Motor Vehicle Stops: December: 67 stops / January: 87 stops
 - Over the last three years, in 2020 officers made 409 motor vehicle stops; in 2021 - 905 stops (121.27% increase); 2022 - 1,462 (61.55% increase from 2021).
 - Speed Enforcement (Radar Assignments Conducted): December – 348 / January – 382
 - Motor Vehicle Accidents: December 2022 - 38 / January 2023 – 20
 - In 2020 – 223 accidents; 2021 – 268 accidents (20.18% increase); 2022 – 326 accidents (21.64% increase from 2021)
 - Speed Trailer: The speed trailer was moved to several different locations during the months of December and January. Mainly it was housed on Center Road, and on two different occasions on Amity Road and Litchfield Turnpike.

The Board voted unanimously (Desir/Esposito) to accept the Activity Report.

REPORT of the CHIEF of POLICE

- **Dispatch Center Renovation (Update):** We continue to move ahead with this project and in December we received the architect's proposed tentative design plans. Last month, Brad (Facilities) and I met with the architect from Silver Petrucci & Associates and reviewed the plans and made some modifications. Yesterday we received his most updated design plan and estimate as to the associated construction costs. Later this week, we have a meeting scheduled with a project manager from NORCOMCT to review the logistics associated with temporarily relocating the equipment from the Dispatch Center to the Training Room during the construction phase, and then moving it all back up front again when construction is completed. I anticipate that I will have additional information to share with you regarding the project at our next meeting.
- **AMR-CAD Integration:** On January 25th, we went live with an integration between American Medical Response and our CAD System. Now in addition to having direct telephone communications between our Dispatch Center and the AMR New Haven Communications Center, this new integration provides us immediate interoperability with them through our CAD system for any calls in which the medic or ambulance is dispatched to. With this new system, we can quickly see all the AMR dispatch information and related notes and they can do the same with our information, except for any confidential COLLECT information, which they are not privileged to view, and it is filtered out by the NEXGEN system. The mutual benefit to all of us is that with this integration, critical information is now being updated constantly and it is being shared promptly in "real time" and not taking any time away from the Dispatchers while multi-tasking.
- **Axon Body-Worn Camera/Dashboard Camera Project (Update):** We are continuing to move forward with our body-worn camera and dashboard camera projects. As of the middle of January, all personnel have been issued and were trained in the use and operation of the new Axon Body-Worn Cameras, and they are currently being deployed to the staff as they go out on a daily basis. Our new Axon dashboard cameras are on order and are on track to be shipped in the next few weeks and installed sometime in April, if not sooner.

The Board voted unanimously (Kopel/Desir) to accept the Report of the Chief of Police.

PERSONNEL MATTERS:

- **Extended Absences:** Since we last met, we have had one Dispatcher who had been out on extended medical leave since September and returned to work December 24th. During the month of December, we also had four employees out of work, each for several days, all associated with Covid; all have since returned to work. We currently have one Officer who unfortunately and unexpectedly had to go out on an extended medical absence effective December 28th, and is now anticipated to be out of work for approximately three months. Last week we were notified that another Officer is tentatively scheduled to be out of work beginning at the end of March for approximately two months in association with a workers' comp injury related procedure. These absences coupled with a vacancy due to a recent retirement are going to keep posing staffing challenges and will continue to impact our overtime line as we do our best to get the job done with the resources we have.
- **New Hires – (Status Updates):** Officer Meehan has completed his first six months with us and he continues performing very well and without incident. Our newest Dispatcher, Jesenia Newton-Lewis has achieved all of her mandatory certifications. Currently, she transitioned from several weeks on the evening shift to the day shift, where she will experience an increase in call volume as she continues with that facet of multi-tasking and on the job training.
- **Hiring Process (Status Updates):** As I'm sure you are aware, police agencies across the country are struggling to recruit, hire and retain personnel. That trend is something we too are dealing with, and it was clearly evident during the most recent regional recruit testing process administered by the South Central Criminal Justice Administration, which was completed at the end of last month. This testing process was held seeking potential candidates for entry level positions in any of five area police departments, including ours. Unfortunately, there were less than 25 applicants who participated in the testing and that number was further reduced by their test scores. As a result, the hiring process is very competitive due to the number of agencies seeking to hire from a very limited pool of candidates. As of the closing date, which was February 3rd, we have received only 5 applicants. We have begun the background investigation process on them this week and I will keep you advised as to how the process progresses. We hope to find a suitable candidate and will move forward with that.

- IA Investigation Notice: After receiving a complaint from a resident regarding the performance of two officers on a call for service complaint they recently responded to, I have ordered the initiation of an Internal Affairs Investigation that is currently ongoing and is being conducted by the Deputy Chief.

BUDGET MATTERS:

- FY24 Operating Budget (Update): On January 3rd, we met and reviewed our proposed FY24 Operating Budget with Budget Subcommittee members Commissioners Esposito and Cardozo. On the evening of January 24th, it was presented before a joint meeting of the Boards of Selectmen and Finance. Thank you to Commissioners Cardozo and Kopel for your presence and support at that meeting. The next steps in the budget process will be the Board of Selectmen review and recommendations to the Board of Finance later this month, then the Board of Finance will review and make the final budget recommendations in March. The Town Budget Hearing is set for April 24th, with the Annual Town Meeting scheduled for May 15th.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Board voted unanimously (Kopel/Esposito) to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners at 7:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Janice Innocenzi, Administrative Assistant

WOODBRIIDGE TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

MOTIONS

February 7, 2023

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- There were no Public Comments.

TRAFFIC MATTERS:

- Towing Service Issues:

The Board voted unanimously (Desir/Kopel) to continue the towing practice of giving two tow rotations to Amity Motors.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Board voted unanimously (Esposito/Desir) to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Traffic Authority and move directly into the regular meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners at 6:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Janice Innocenzi, Administrative Assistant

WOODBIDGE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS

MOTIONS

February 7, 2023

APPROVAL of MINUTES:

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Abstained: Berke, Desir

Motion passes.

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Votes in Favor: Berke, Desir, Cardozo, Kopel

Abstained: Esposito

Motion passes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- There were no Public Comments.

REVIEW of REPORTS:

- FINANCIAL REPORT:

The Board voted unanimously (Kopel/Esposito) to accept the Financial Report.

- Activity Report:

The Board voted unanimously (Desir/Esposito) to accept the Activity Report.

REPORT of the CHIEF of POLICE

The Board voted unanimously (Kopel/Desir) to accept the Report of the Chief of Police.

PERSONNEL MATTERS:

- There were no motions made, no votes taken, during the discussion of Personnel Matters.

BUDGET MATTERS:

- There were no motions made, no votes taken, during the discussion of Budget Matters.

ADJOURNMENT:

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Respectfully submitted:

Janice Innocenzi, Administrative Assistant